

Avtandil
RUKHADZE

Jews in the USSR

FIGURES
FACTS
COMMENT

Avtandil
RUKHADZE

Jews in the USSR

FIGURES
FACTS
COMMENT



Novosti Press Agency
Publishing House
Moscow 1984

Data provided by the Central Statistical Board of the USSR Council of Ministers and other Soviet Government organisations and scientific research institutes, material taken from the Soviet and foreign press, consultations given by specialists and officials are used in this booklet

0802010206

© Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1984

Editing completed on June 29, 1984

CONTENTS

Foreword	5
Jews in Old Russia	9
The October 1917 Revolution and Solution of the "Jewish Question"	18
Equal Among Equals	27
Cultural Development	36
"Jewish Education" or Educated Jews?	44
Practicing Jews	51
The Jewish Autonomous Region	59
The Anti-Zionist Committee of Soviet Public Opinion	65
Who Are They, "Prisoners of Zion"?	75
The Truth About Emigration to Israel	93
Testimony of the Deceived	99

FOREWORD

In the autumn of 1978 US Senators Jacob K. Javits and Abraham Ribicoff visited the Soviet Union. At a reception given in their honour by Malcolm Toon, then US Ambassador to Moscow, I was introduced to Senator Javits. During our conversation I gave him a copy of the first edition of this booklet, which had just come off the press.

He kindly agreed to grant me an interview and we met next day in the lobby of his hotel, as arranged. Before the interview Senator Javits said he had read the booklet. Though he had some doubts and objections, on the whole he liked it because it presented many facts little known in the West. Some problems were viewed from an angle unfamiliar to Western readers, but it all helped one to form a balanced judgement.

Many readers abroad who have sent letters to the Novosti Press Agency Publishing House express the same view. It corresponds to the aim of my work as I hate to impose my views on anybody and for that very reason I cite so many figures, documents and other facts.

The reader who goes through this booklet carefully and without the bias fostered over many years by Zionist and some other Western mass me-

dia, will, I have no doubt, draw correct conclusions about the life of Jews in the USSR.

That was how I concluded the note to readers I wrote in the autumn of 1981, about a year before the second edition of this booklet appeared.

Many events of importance have occurred since then, directly or indirectly relevant to the theme of this booklet, above all—the bloodshed in Lebanon.

As usually happens in such cases Zionist-Israeli anti-Soviet propaganda was stepped up “in defence of Soviet Jews” and against “official Soviet antisemitism”.

The extent of the anti-Soviet campaign was illustrated, in particular, by the fact that at the height of the Lebanese tragedy what was called an “extraordinary world conference in defence of Soviet Jewry” was convened in Jerusalem in March 1983.

The time and place chosen for this assembly, inspired by international Zionism (such “conferences” had previously been held in Brussels), clearly revealed the aims pursued by the “conference” sponsors and their backers. The aims were *to reduce the intensity of mounting worldwide indignation at the act of Israeli aggression in Lebanon, accompanied by acts of genocide and atrocity against the Palestinian Arab people and the Lebanese*; to detract the attention of world public opinion from the crimes of the Israeli military.

At the same time such an anti-Soviet undertaking fully accords with the calls being issued by Israel’s Western protectors for “a crusade” against communism.

Having no real facts at their disposal to prove the existence of “official antisemitism” in the USSR the anti-Soviet propaganda-mongers usually

refer to articles appearing from time to time in the Soviet press or to books published in the Soviet Union which criticise the ideology and practice of Zionism and condemn the adventurist policy of Israeli extremists. They tear sentences from their contexts, change the emphasis and juggle with the facts.

The Zionist propaganda-mongers go so far as to declare the formation of the Anti-Zionist Committee of Soviet Public Opinion in the spring of 1983 as "a new antisemitic step" arguing in a primitive way that Zionism is identical with the interests of all Jews and anti-Zionism is identical with anti-semitism.

In accordance with such logic all who reject Zionism and condemn Israel's aggressive policy, who regard as just the Arabs' demands for the return of the territories occupied by Israel, are declared to be antisemitic.

Raising the bogey of "antisemitism" in order to recruit Jews to their ranks and get them to emigrate to Israel, the Zionists at the same time resort to blackmail by accusing anyone who criticises Zionism of being antisemitic.

The Israeli obscurantists have long been killing Arabs, who are a kindred Semitic people. They have been driving them from their lands and cynically persecuting them. At the same time Zionist and Western propaganda spares no effort in accusing the Soviet Union of "persecuting Jews".

In Israel, alongside the open persecution of the Arab citizens of Israel, the Jews who came mainly from East European countries, are subject to discrimination in every field. At the same time Zionist-Israeli propaganda keeps harping on "official antisemitism in the USSR".

In Paris a bomb is set off near a synagogue; in California cutthroats from the "Identity" organisation and from a similar organisation called "Posse comitatus" desecrate Jewish cemeteries and attack synagogues. At the same time the anti-Soviet propaganda machine is spreading lies about the "persecution of Jewish believers in the USSR". Bookstalls and bookstore shelves in the United States and in other Western countries are full of antisemitic and **fascist** literature, but at the same time some circles in the West voice false indignation at "antisemitic publications in the USSR".

In the United States—the richest country of what is called "the free world"—about 200,000 Jews are living below the poverty line. But at the same time propaganda in the West, above all, in the United States, protests hypocritically about the "grievous plight of Jews in the USSR".

I realise that all this is inspired first and foremost by persons and organisations of extremely anti-Soviet and anti-communist views and pursuing selfish political aims. But quite a number of people let themselves be drawn into the orbit of such anti-Soviet propaganda.

I continue to hope that for such people and for those who sincerely want to know the truth about Soviet Jews this booklet will prove useful and helpful.

JEWS IN OLD RUSSIA

Early History—Antisemitic Policy of Tsarist Government—Deformed Social Structure—Bolsheviks Against Antisemitism and Zionism, for Equality of Jews

Jews appeared on the territory of what is now the USSR in very early times. Following the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem in 586 B. C., some Palestinian Jews came to the shores of Colchis and settled in the Caucasus. By the time of the insurrection which Bar Kohba led against the Romans in Palestine in 132 A.D. there was a compact Jewish community in Georgia. This is shown by archeological excavations in Mtskheta, the ancient capital of Georgia.

Jews first settled in the state of Kiev and in Lithuania approximately in the eighth century. Early in the 15th century Jewish communities emerged in Byelorussia. In the history of the state of Moscow the first reference to Jews dates back to 1474. In medieval times a large part of the Jewish population of Western Europe, persecuted and hunted by religious fanatics, sought refuge in Russia. After the Tatars ravaged the Kiev Principality most of the Jewish population there fled to Poland. From early times there was quite a large Jewish population in Poland, whose eastern and central regions formed part of Russia from the end of the 18th century till 1918.

It was the policy of the tsarist government to sow dissension between national communities and to foment religious discord. The Jews too were victims of this policy. Late in the 18th century a ghetto system, called the Pale, was established. Jews were forbidden to live in the capital or major cities. They were allowed to settle only in small towns in several Western regions of the Russian Empire. Jews could not engage in agriculture. A law on "percentage quotas" limited the right of the Jews to education. The tsarist autocracy imposed over 700 legal restrictions of every kind on Jews. Only a very few wealthy Jews and converts to Christianity managed to evade these restrictions and bans.

Such a discriminatory policy could not but affect the social composition of the Jewish population in Russia, which assumed extremely distorted forms. Official statistics showed that on the eve of the October 1917 Revolution the composition of the Jewish population employed in one way or another was as follows:

workers in big factories	4 per cent
workers in small workshops	11 per cent
artisans (mainly tailors and cobblers)	18.4 per cent
peasants	2.2 per cent
office workers and professional people	10 per cent
traders, peddlers, small-scale entrepreneurs and people of no particular occupation	54.4 per cent

Concentrated in small towns the Jewish population was artificially isolated. As time passed they increasingly withdrew into themselves.

The distinguished Soviet statesman and writer Anatoly Lunacharsky (1875-1933) described the position of Jews in tsarist Russia as follows:

"Most of the three million Jews in Russia¹ were degenerating with every generation into weak-chested, shortsighted, feeble and wretched people suffering from foul air and bad food, who could only be cobblers, tailors or peddlers and were incapable of anything else. The Jews became people who had to 'live on air', to exercise their wits to find crumbs in order to survive themselves and feed their families. They became a people with a very high infant mortality, stricken by tremendous suffering and living in unimaginable filth, in inconceivably shocking unhygienic conditions."

Early in the 20th century, when there was an upsurge of the revolutionary movement in Russia, the tsarist government tried to sidetrack mass discontent with the existing system by cultivating chauvinism and antisemitism. Hostility to Jews was persistently fostered by the churches and schools, by reactionary literature, "scientific" Judophobia and provocative lies about Jewish rites and so on. The tsarist authorities organised anti-Jewish pogroms and the beating up of Jews.

Eminent public figures in Russia, prominent writers such as Vladimir Korolenko, Maxim Gorky, the well-known lawyer Anatoly Koni and other progressive Russians vigorously exposed the antisemitic actions of the authorities and strongly protested against the pogroms.

During the first Russian revolution of 1905-07 workers led by the Bolsheviks undertook to defend neighbourhoods inhabited by poverty-stricken Jews and they repeatedly put the antisemitic mobsters to flight.

¹ Pre-revolutionary Russia included eastern and central regions of Poland.

During this period only the Bolshevik Party led by Lenin firmly opposed all forms of national oppression, including oppression of the Jews. At a time when the policy of Jewish nationalists was to detach the Jewish workers from other workers, a policy which did not help improve their conditions in any way, Lenin, the Bolshevik Party and the Russian proletariat fought selflessly for the social, economic, political and national rights of Jewish workers. The Bolshevik Party was the only party that had a clear, effective and well-considered programme for solving the nationalities question, including the Jewish question.

In 1905 the Bolsheviks circulated among Jewish workers an appeal in Yiddish. In this appeal Lenin wrote:

"In Russia the workers of all nationalities, especially those of non-Russian nationality, endure an economic and political oppression such as obtains in no other country. The Jewish workers, as a disfranchised nationality, not only suffer general economic and political oppression, but they also suffer under the yoke which deprives them of elementary civic rights. The heavier this yoke, the greater the need for the closest possible unity among the proletarians of the different nationalities; for without such unity a victorious struggle against the general oppression is impossible."¹

In examining ways of solving the Jewish question as part of the nationalities question within the framework of the whole country and as a political and social problem, Lenin said it could be solved only after the power of the tsar, the capitalists and the landlords had been overthrown and a socialist society built. That was why the Bol-

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 8, p. 495.

sheviks worked to rally the workers of all nations and nationalities in all working-class organisations—trade union, co-operative, consumer, educational and other associations—in opposition to any kind of bourgeois nationalism. They realised that only this type of unity and amalgamation could uphold democracy and defend the interests of the workers against capital—which was already international and was becoming more so—and promote the development of mankind towards a new way of life that was alien to all privileges and all exploitation.

In exposing the social-nationalism of the Bund¹ Lenin wrote: "One who has adopted the standpoint of nationalism naturally arrives at the desire to erect a Chinese Wall around his nationality, his national working-class movement; he is unembarrassed even by the fact that it would mean building separate walls in each city, in each little town and village, unembarrassed even by the fact that by his tactics of division and dismemberment *he is reducing to nil* the great call for the rallying and unity of the proletarians of all nations, all races and all languages."²

To ensure the interests of the working class and all other working people, to fight tsarism and capitalism it was necessary to establish the fraternal solidarity and complete unity of workers of all nationalities and to give a firm and constant rebuff to the whole nationalistic ideology and pol-

¹ The Bund—a petty-bourgeois Jewish nationalistic organisation in Russia. Its leaders demanded that the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP) should be split up on the basis of nationality and that their organisation should be recognised as the sole representative of Jewish workers in the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party.

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 6, pp. 518-19.

icy of the bourgeoisie and its agents. Lenin pointed out:

"...We must strive to unite the workers of all nations as closely as possible, strive to unite them for a joint struggle against *all* chauvinism, against *all* national exclusiveness, against *all* nationalism."¹

The rise of the revolutionary movement in Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries frightened not only ruling circles in the European countries, but also rich capitalists of Jewish origin. Seeking to distract the attention of working people from revolutionary struggle the ruling circles in the countries of Europe resorted to various means, including the fanning of antisemitism. So far as Jewish capitalists were concerned, they did their utmost to advance the Zionist notion of a "Jewish state". This period saw the growing activity of Zionism as an extreme expression of Jewish bourgeois nationalism, as the ideology and practice of rich capitalists of Jewish origin.

In the series of such articles as "Does Jewish Proletariat Need an 'Independent Political Party?'", "Maximum Brazenness and Minimum Logic" and "The Position of the Bund in the Party" which Lenin wrote at the turn of the century, he exposed the bourgeois-nationalist class nature and the anti-popular essence of Zionism. He presented the scientific arguments for the principled attitude of Marxism towards Zionism at a time when the Zionist movement was making its first steps in the political arena. In making a fetish of the "sorry isolation" of the Jews from other peoples the Jewish nationalists were, as Lenin put it, forced to seek grounds justifying their isolation, and in this

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 20, p. 224.

search grasp at the Zionist idea of a Jewish "nation" or resort to demagoguery and scurrilities.¹

In criticising the Bundists, who after their 4th Congress in April 1901 adopted increasingly pro-Zionist positions, *Iskra*, the paper of the RSDLP, wrote then that the "Jewish state" which the Zionists declared to be a necessary precondition for solving the "Jewish question" could become only a "Jewish kingdom" with "its own police, gendarmes, civil servants and its own government", that is to say, a capitalist state ruled by the Jewish capitalists either on their own or with the help of Bundist and Social-Zionist leaders.

In contrast to the epoch-making slogan of proletarian unity Zionism, like any other nationalistic ideology, is energetically preaching "class peace" between exploiters and exploited, between Jewish millionaires, on the one hand, and poor and unemployed Jews, on the other. Lenin exposed these false and poisonous views of the Zionists (and antisemites) according to whom there were no class contradictions among the Jews and there existed a "community of Jewish interests". He showed that these claims were intended to detach and sidetrack Jewish workers from the struggle of the proletariat of all nationalities against the capitalists. Lenin wrote:

"The capitalists and landowners want, at all costs, to keep the workers of different nations apart while the powers that be live splendidly together as shareholders in profitable concerns involving millions... Orthodox Christians and Jews, Russians and Germans, Poles and Ukrainians, everyone who possesses *capital*, exploit the workers of all nations in company."²

¹ See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 7, p. 63.

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 19, p. 92.

Lenin blasted the slanderous statements by the Zionists and Bundists that the workers of Russia and even the Social Democrats were contaminated with antisemitism and that antisemitism was insurmountable. He pointed out:

"To call a fight for the Zionist *idea* of a Jewish nation, for the federal *principle* of Party organisation, a 'fight for the equality of the Jews in the world family of the proletariat' is to degrade the struggle from the plane of ideas and principles to that of suspicion, incitement and fanning of historically-evolved prejudices."¹

Lenin repeatedly exposed the link between antisemitism and the interests of the bourgeois and not of the working-class sections of the population.

From the outset Lenin and the Bolshevik Party he led opposed great-power nationalism and all manifestations of national and racial discrimination, including antisemitism. In 1914 on Lenin's initiative the Bolsheviks submitted to the 4th State Duma² a Bill on National Equality. Clause 3 of the Bill read: "All laws, temporary regulations, notes to laws... imposing restrictions on Jews in any sphere of social or state life are hereby rescinded."

The Bill was published in the Bolshevik paper *Put Pravdy* (Path of Truth). It played a great role in exposing the great-power antisemitic policy of tsarism. Referring to this Bill in 1914 Lenin made it clear that the Jewish question could be radically solved only together with other fundamental issues confronting Russia.³ He pointed out

¹ V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 7, p. 102.

² State Duma—an elected legislative body with limited rights.

³ See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 20, p. 172.

that the Bolsheviks had, naturally, never expected the 4th State Duma to lift the restrictions imposed on Jews and other "aliens". But the Bolsheviks believed that the working class had an obligation to state its view on the matter. The voice of the Russian working class was to ring in protest against national oppression, against oppression of Jews too.

As Lenin predicted, the 4th Duma did not annul the restrictions on Jews.

The fight of the Bolsheviks for national equality met with a broad response and support among the masses of working people, and progressive intellectuals of many nationalities actively sided with the Bolshevik Party in the revolutionary struggle. Jews were prominent in its ranks. Among them there were such distinguished revolutionaries as Yakov Sverdlov, Solomon Lozovsky, V. Volodarsky (Moisei Goldstein), Moisei Uritsky, Maxim Litvinov (Finkelstein), and Yemelyan Yaroslavsky (Minei Gubelman).

THE OCTOBER 1917 REVOLUTION AND SOLUTION OF THE "JEWISH QUESTION"

Declaration of Rights of the Peoples of Russia—
Lenin's Decrees—Changes in Social Composition—
Great Contribution to the Fight Against Nazism—
Triumph of Leninist National Policy

The October 1917 Socialist Revolution proclaimed the complete equality of all the peoples living in Russia. The Declaration of Rights of the Peoples of Russia signed by Lenin on November 15, 1917, annulled all national and national-religious privileges and discriminations.

The Declaration said that in solving the nationalities question Soviet power would be guided by the following principles:

(1) The equality and sovereignty of all the peoples of Russia,

(2) The right of the peoples of Russia to free self-determination, including secession and formation of an independent state,

(3) The abolition of all national and national-religious privileges and restrictions, and

(4) The free development of national minorities and ethnic groups inhabiting the territory of Russia.

The Declaration of Rights of the Peoples of Russia was the first major step taken by the Soviet state toward the national liberation of the peoples inhabiting the former Russian Empire. The masses of working people of all the national minorities of the country welcomed it with enthusiasm.

Together with other government decrees, such as the Decree on Peace, Decree on Land and Decree on Nationalisation, which were to help establish a society of social justice, the Declaration helped rally all the peoples of Russia around the Bolshevik Party for consolidating the gains of the revolution and for repulsing the forces of counter-revolution.

Yakov Sverdlov, an outstanding revolutionary who was Lenin's friend and comrade-in-arms, became the first president of the young Soviet state.

On February 2, 1918 a decree on separation of the church from the state was passed on Lenin's initiative. From then on the Jews, like other nationalities which the tsarist government regarded as religious groups, were given the legal status of nationality, a status that does not depend on the faith one professes, on one's religious or atheist views.

Moreover, Lenin proposed passing a number of decrees directed against antisemitic practices and pogromists. This was of particular importance at a time when the Civil War was raging. The White Guards and the armed forces of fourteen imperialist states, which had come to the rescue of the bourgeoisie whose rule was overthrown by the revolution, tightened their ring around the young Soviet Republic. In the period from 1917 to 1921 brutal anti-Jewish pogroms were incited in the areas overrun by the counter-revolutionaries. In this connection a decree was passed which said that the Council of People's Commissars, as the Soviet government was then called, regarded antisemitism and anti-Jewish pogroms as a "threat to the cause of the workers' and peasants' revolution and urged the working people of socialist Russia to fight this evil with all available means". When

the document was drafted, Lenin introduced the following addition in his own hand:

"The Council of People's Commissars hereby instructs all Sovdeps [abbreviation for Soviets of Deputies, that is to say, local government authorities] to take firm measures to check antisemitic actions. Mobsters and the inciters of pogroms shall be outlawed."¹

In March 1919 the head of Soviet government made a speech which was recorded on a gramophone record and published in the press. Lenin said:

"The capitalists strive to sow and foment hatred between workers of different faiths, different nations and different races... Only the most ignorant and downtrodden people can believe the lies and slander that are spread about Jews." He ended his speech by saying: "Shame on those who foment hatred towards the Jews, who foment hatred towards other nations."²

The young Soviet state took effective practical measures which abrogated the tsarist laws on Jews, abolished the ghettos—the Pale, and the quotas restricting the admission of Jews to educational establishments and asserted the right of Jews to engage in agriculture.

By abolishing the exploitation of man by man, the Soviet Republic destroyed the roots of racial and national strife and hatred. But Soviet power naturally could not wipe out overnight the prejudices which the ruling circles and the clergy had fostered in the minds and behaviour of people over many years. Firmly advancing the principles

¹ See *Decrees of Soviet Power*, Vol. 3, Moscow, 1964, p. 94 (in Russian).

² V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 29, pp. 252-53.

of Lenin's national policy the Communist Party and Soviet state in the course of building socialism created not only the social and economic conditions but also political and legal conditions for ensuring the real equality and all-round development of all the nations and nationalities of the Soviet Union. The first Soviet Constitution of 1918 consolidated and guaranteed the equality of all nations.

For the first time in world history the criminal codes of all the republics forming the Soviet Union provided for severe punishment for people fomenting racial or national strife or outraging national dignity. Such offences were punishable by terms of imprisonment ranging from six months to three years or exile from two to five years.

It is difficult to exaggerate how important all these actions of the young Soviet state were for the millions of people who belonged to nations and nationalities formerly subjected to oppression and discrimination. These acts affected the position of Jews too. Many of them left the Pale to join enthusiastically in building the new life. The country was creating conditions for working people to get an education, to enjoy cultural benefits, to participate actively in production and political life regardless of their nationality or religious belief.

The Soviet state paid special attention to bringing about a gradual change in the distorted social composition of the Jewish population.

Pyotr Smidovich, Deputy Chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR,¹ who for many years headed a committee responsible for

¹ As the supreme body of Soviet power was called in those days.

helping Jews to establish themselves on the land, wrote:

"For the first time in history a state—the Soviet state—has undertaken to solve the Jewish question. For the first time in history this question is being dealt with on a comprehensive scale with account taken of all the ensuing consequences, in a specific and practical way, as the question requires."

Besides government authorities, specially created institutions and public organisations, working under the guidance of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, dealt with this question.

From 1929—a year that marked a turning point in the country's economic development—hundreds of thousands of Jews were drawn into large-scale socialist industry. There were 153,000 Jewish workers in 1926, 565,000 in 1935 and 689,000 in 1939.

Thus the class composition of the Jewish population radically changed. Former proletarians exploited by the entrepreneur or proprietor of a small workshop, artisans and peddlers became workers in socialist industry, enjoying equal rights with other members of the working class forming the leading force in the country. In 1930, for instance, Jewish workers constituted 11.1 per cent of the total labour force in the metallurgical industry of the Ukraine, as compared with 6.8 per cent in 1927. Throughout the country, in all its industrial centres Jewish workers were learning new trades to become skilled workers in engineering and in the building industry.

In a short period of time a big working-class section over one million-strong (including families) was formed among the Jewish population.

By 1927 a considerable proportion of the Jewish citizens were office employees. Before the revolution they worked only as bookkeepers and shop assistants. Under Soviet rule the doors of state bodies in the field of public health, public education, science, culture, industry, transport and construction, and the state and co-operative trade network were open to them. In 1935 up to 30 per cent of office employees in the country were Jews. The early five-year plan periods saw a radical redistribution of Jewish office employees in various sectors of the national economy. Most of them began to work in industry and construction and a smaller proportion at establishments in the cultural sphere. The number of Jewish office employees in the state and co-operative trade network markedly declined.

The drive of the Communist Party to collectivise agriculture helped establish Jews on the land. In the period from 1925 to 1935 the number of Jewish farm workers rose from 111,060 to 270,000. A distinguishing feature of the mass establishment of Jews on the land was that from 1926 on most of the Jews were in collective farms. By 1932 collectivisation was in the main completed on the lands made available to Jewish settlers. The socialist system of farming enabled Jews without farming experience to master advanced methods of agriculture quickly.

Thus during the building of socialism the social structure of the Jewish population changed substantially. By 1935 it consisted of workers, employees, members of the intelligentsia and collective farmers. The Soviet Jewish nationality became a socialist one.

The triumph of the October 1917 Revolution and the Soviet government's Leninist national pol-

icy have dispelled the myth spread by the Zionists about "insurmountable antisemitism" and the only solution to the "Jewish question" being through creating a "Jewish state" and resettling all the Jews there.

* * *

In the USSR the Jews have become true patriots of their Soviet homeland. This was strikingly proved during the Great Patriotic War of 1941-45 against the nazi invaders.

The Soviet Union suffered tremendous losses in the war against Hitler Germany and its satellites. Victory was won at the cost of 20 million lives. People of more than 100 nations and nationalities living in the Soviet Union contributed to the defeat of the enemy. They all demonstrated great patriotism, courage and a determination to win. The Jews occupy a place of honour among them. On January 1, 1943, when the most critical battles were being fought on Soviet territory, Jews constituted 1.5 per cent of the total strength of the armed forces. Major-General Volkenshtein, Hero of the Soviet Union, said, for instance:

"I am a soldier: All my adult life I have served in the ranks of the Soviet army. In both the Civil War (1918-21) and the Great Patriotic War (1941-45) I fought against the enemies of my homeland. Sons of my homeland—Russians, Ukrainians, Armenians, Byelorussians, Tatars and Jews—invariably went into battle shoulder to shoulder."

There are more than 100 generals of Jewish origin among past and present Soviet army commanders. Among them: the legendary General Lev Dovator, posthumously honoured with the title of

Hero of the Soviet Union; Army General Yakov Kreiser, Hero of the Soviet Union; Colonel-General David Dragunsky, twice Hero of the Soviet Union (now heading a military college and Chairman of the anti-Zionist Committee of Soviet Public Opinion), Colonel-General Alexander Tsyrlin, D. Sc. (Military); Lieut.-General Matvei Vainrub, Hero of the Soviet Union, and Lieut.-General Shimon Krivoshein, Hero of the Soviet Union. There are many other Jewish generals who distinguished themselves and whose names command respect in the Soviet Union.

Tens of thousands of Jewish servicemen displayed courage, valour and heroism in the war against nazism and were awarded combat orders and medals. Almost 160,000 Jews were awarded orders and medals and 117 were honoured with the highest award—the title of Hero of the Soviet Union—for feats of heroism on the battlefield.

Together with representatives of other peoples Soviet Jews fought heroically against the nazis in partisan detachments and Resistance groups, especially in enemy-occupied Soviet territory, as well as in other countries. The names of Soviet Jews who organised uprisings in the nazi ghettos of Minsk, Bialystok, Vilnius and Sobibor have gone down in history. This is also true of partisans and heroes of the Resistance movement—Itzik Vittenberg, Girsh Glik and many other renowned underground combatants.

Tatyana Markus, for instance, 19-year-old heroine of the underground movement in Kiev, personally killed many nazi officers while taking part in actions against nazi punitive detachments. When the Gestapo got its hands on this Jewish girl, she died a hero's death performing her last feat of courage; though the nazi butchers subject-

ed her to excruciating torture, she did not betray any of her fellow-fighters in the underground movement.

Soviet people cherish the sacred memory of their heroes. Every city, town and village has a memorial or obelisk in honour of Soviet soldiers who fell in the war. Among the names engraved in golden letters on them are those of Soviet Jews who laid down their lives for their homeland, for the liberation of peoples from the nazi yoke.

EQUAL AMONG EQUALS

Population—Ethnic Groups—Distribution—Natural
Assimilation—Constitutional Guarantees—Participa-
tion in Political, Social and Economic Life—Merited
Honours and Awards

Jews are one of the more than 120 nations and nationalities of the USSR, all enjoying equal rights.

The census of January 1979 showed there were 1,810,876 Jews in the USSR. They thus constituted 0.7 per cent of the total population. In numbers they come 16th among the nationalities dwelling in the USSR.

Among the Jewish population there are four small groups which differ ethnically, culturally and in their way of life: the Georgian Jews, whose native language is Georgian, the Highland Jews, also known as Tats, who live in Daghestan in the North Caucasus and some in Transcaucasia (their native language being Tat), the Bukhara Jews in Uzbekistan whose native language is Tajik, and the Crimean Jews, otherwise known as Karaims, whose native language is Crimean Tatar.

Had it not been for the Second World War the Jewish population would have been much larger. In occupied territories the nazis butchered and tortured to death tens of thousands of Jews. Of the close to 200,000 people exterminated at Babi Yar near Kiev 70,000 were Jews. Large numbers of Jews were killed in Byelorussia, Moldavia, Lat-

via, Lithuania and Estonia. The list would have been much longer if masses of people had not been evacuated by the Soviet authorities from threatened areas.

In January 1971 the late Yehuda-Leib Levin, Chief Rabbi of the Choral Synagogue in Moscow, said of those years:

"I am grateful to my Soviet land for the great deal of good it has done for my people both in peacetime and during the ordeal imposed on them in the Second World War.

"The enemy seized one town after another. But even in those times of severe trial the Soviet government found ways and means of transporting hundreds of thousands of Jews deep into the interior."

The bulk of Soviet Jews now live in the larger cities—Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Minsk, Vilnius, Kishinev, Odessa, Riga, Tbilisi, Tashkent, Sverdlovsk, Irkutsk and Novosibirsk. In Moscow and Leningrad they constitute from three to four per cent and in Odessa and Kishinev—from nine to twelve per cent of the population.

With the establishment of Soviet rule and especially after the war the process of natural assimilation has become particularly marked among the Jews. The size of the Jewish population has tended to decrease from one census to another. What are the reasons for this?

Addressing a congress of the Society for Assistance to Jewish Farming in November 1926 Mikhail Kalinin, the Soviet head of state, President of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR, said two paths of development were open to the masses of Jewish working people: they could either live in cities and become assimilated with the in-

digenous population or settle in compact groups on the land.

To help Jews freely choose ways of national self-determination the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR in 1928 provided free lands by the Amur River in the Soviet Far East, where they could settle on a voluntary basis. Later, in 1934, the area was transformed into an administrative-territorial unit, namely the Jewish Autonomous Region.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s the Communist Party launched a programme for the industrialisation of the Soviet Union. This influenced the Jewish population's choice of path for national self-determination. The overwhelming majority of the Jews preferred to work in various branches of the national economy and to live in towns. It was then that the Jews began to move to the cities, leaving the small towns of the former Jewish Pale. The process of assimilation of Jews with the indigenous population of the places they had moved to—with Russians, Ukrainians, Byelorussians and other peoples—became increasingly marked.

After the war the process of assimilation developed with particular rapidity. Soviet demographers believe this was a result of the nazi invasion when the overwhelming majority of Soviet Jews were evacuated from Western regions, where they had lived in relatively compact groups. After evacuation they were scattered over a wide area ranging from the Northern regions and the Urals to Central Asia and Siberia. After the war a large proportion of the evacuees preferred to remain where they were. After the war the number of mixed marriages soared. Under Soviet law on reaching the age of 16 children of mixed marriages are free to choose the nationality of either

parent. This led to a fall in the size of the Jewish population of the USSR. This trend has been confirmed by statistics.

Marxists have always maintained and continue to maintain that, provided it is voluntary and not compulsory or enforced, assimilation is a natural and progressive process because it reflects the economic and spiritual affinity of peoples, their desire for consolidation, their equality, friendship and fraternity. Lenin wrote that the proletariat welcomed the assimilation of nations, so long as it was not enforced and was not based on privilege. The proletariat could not support the consolidation of nationalism. It upheld all tendencies leading towards the obliteration of national distinctions and the ending of national divisions, all elements strengthening ties between the nationalities and drawing them closer together, all factors contributing to the merging of nations. Lenin pointed out that to oppose such a line would mean to side with reactionary nationalistic philistinism.¹

Soviet socialist society has gradually rid itself of national and racial prejudices and barriers. Friendship of the peoples has become one of its vital principles. As a result, the process of drawing the nations closer and closer together, including natural assimilation, is increasingly widespread. This process promotes the mutual enrichment of cultures and develops customs, habits, traditions and standards of behaviour common to all the Soviet people. It helps mould all the elements that form the basis of the new historical community known as the Soviet people.

Assimilation is by no means restricted to the "Jewish question" alone. It is an objective and

¹ See V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 20, p. 28.

progressive process typical of the present stage of the development of society. In fact, to one degree or another, this process affects all the nations and nationalities of the Soviet Union. Just like the Jews, people of other Soviet nationalities residing outside their national republics or regions are undergoing a process of intensive natural assimilation.

The intensity of this process in the USSR is illustrated by the findings of the census of January 1979. Altogether 16,300,000 non-Russians named Russian as their mother tongue and 61,300,000 listed Russian as the second language they had a perfect command of.

At the same time 186,000 Russians living in Union and autonomous republics and in autonomous regions named the local language as their native tongue and 4,300,000 Russians listed these languages as the second language they had a perfect command of.

As a rule, Jews who live among other Soviet nations and nationalities know their languages. Quite often they regard these languages as their mother tongue.

The 1979 census also revealed that 14.2 per cent of Soviet Jews regarded Yiddish or the language of their Jewish ethnic group as their native tongue. For the sake of comparison it would be fair to note that in the US less than 15 per cent of the Jews know Yiddish, while in Great Britain and France the figure is from 10 to 12 per cent.

Persistent implementation of the principles of Lenin's national policy gave a powerful impulse to the further all-round development of nations and nationalities in the USSR. The new Constitution adopted on October 7, 1977, after nationwide discussion, was in this respect an important land-

mark. In particular, it consolidated the experience acquired over many years in solving the nationalities question in the USSR. It was reflected in a number of important clauses of the Constitution.

Thus Article 34 of it reads:

"Citizens of the USSR are equal before the law, without distinction of origin, social or property status, race or nationality, sex, education, language, attitude to religion, type and nature of occupation, domicile, or other status.

"The equal rights of citizens of the USSR are guaranteed in all fields of economic, political, social, and cultural life."

Article 36 advances and specifies the principle of the equality of nations and nationalities. It states:

"Citizens of the USSR of different races and nationalities have equal rights.

"Exercise of these rights is ensured by a policy of all-round development and drawing together of all the nations and nationalities of the USSR, by educating citizens in the spirit of Soviet patriotism and socialist internationalism, and by the possibility to use their native language and the languages of other peoples of the USSR.

"Any direct or indirect limitation of the rights of citizens or establishment of direct or indirect privileges on grounds of race or nationality, and any advocacy of racial or national exclusiveness, hostility or contempt, are punishable by law."

For the first time the Constitution emphasised the importance of the Soviet citizen's national dignity. This is a distinguishing feature of our Fundamental Law. Regrettably, there are still people who permit themselves to assail the national dignity of a person. In this connection Article 64 is of special importance. It reads:

"It is the duty of every citizen of the USSR to respect the national dignity of other citizens, and to strengthen friendship of the nations and nationalities of the multinational Soviet state."

This thesis is a component part of the Leninist national policy which the CPSU and the Soviet state are following.

Thus in the Report of the CPSU Central Committee to the 26th Party Congress, held in February 1981, we read:

"The national sensibilities and national dignity of every person are respected in our country. The CPSU has fought and will always resolutely fight against such attitudes alien to the nature of socialism as chauvinism or nationalism, against any nationalistic aberration, be it, say, antisemitism or Zionism. We are against tendencies aimed at an artificial obliteration of national identities. And, to a similar extent, we consider their artificial inflation inadmissible. It is the Party's sacrosanct duty to educate the people in a spirit of Soviet patriotism and socialist internationalism, to foster a sense of pride in belonging to the great integral Soviet Union."

The further development of socialist democracy helped draw representatives of all Soviet nations and nationalities, including Jews, into all spheres of political and economic life, into science, education and culture.

Just like people of other nationalities Jews are widely represented both in the government of the USSR (the USSR Council of Ministers) and in the governments of the Union and autonomous republics, as well as in other state and Party bodies.

Eight members of the USSR Supreme Soviet are Jews. Several thousand Jews have been elected to the supreme legislative bodies of Union and auton-

omous republics and to local government bodies, the Soviets of People's Deputies.

Veniamin Dymshits, Deputy Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers; Lev Volodarsky, D. Sc. (Economics), Chief of the Central Statistical Board of the USSR Council of Ministers; Alexander Chakovsky, writer, editor of the weekly newspaper *Literaturnaya gazeta*; Lev Shapiro, first secretary of the CPSU regional committee in the Jewish Autonomous Region; other statesmen, public figures, scientists and military leaders are Jews.

Though Jews accounted for less than one per cent of the USSR's population in 1980, they constituted 5.3 per cent of the scientists, almost six per cent of those working in the field of culture and the arts, writers and journalists, 3.4 per cent of the medical staff and nearly six per cent of the lawyers working in various fields.

Several hundred thousand Soviet Jews have been awarded orders and medals for outstanding labour feats and for achievements in the political, economic, scientific and cultural fields.

Eighty Jews have been honoured with the country's highest award, the title of Hero of Socialist Labour. Four of these earned this distinction twice and three of them three times.

In the Soviet Union streets and squares of towns and cities are named after distinguished figures, a token of respect to revolutionaries, army commanders, scientists, writers, wartime and peacetime heroes.

Yakov Sverdlov, first President of the Soviet Republic, won tremendous respect. A big administrative and industrial centre in the Ural region—Sverdlovsk, several dozen factories and plants, collective farms and educational establishments, a

central district in Moscow and a central square in that city were named after him.

Dozens of streets were named after well-known Jews in many cities and towns.

Here are a few: Lazar Papernik Street in Moscow (he was a Hero of the Soviet Union), Uritsky Prospekt in Leningrad, Shalom Aleichem Street in Kiev, Nakhimson Street in Yaroslavl (he was a revolutionary), Grigori Feigin Street in Kronstadt (named after a Civil War hero), Slomnitsky Sisters' Street in Berdichev (both were revolutionaries), Itzik Vittenberg Street in Vilnius (he was a hero of the Resistance movement), Yakov Shenkman Street in Sverdlovsk (he was a Civil War hero), Grigori Chudnovsky Street in Dnepropetrovsk (he was a revolutionary), Street of Heroes of the Soviet Union Katunin and Shandalov in Gomel, Street of Hero of the Soviet Union Boris Kugel in Novosibirsk, Street of Hero of the Soviet Union Iossif Bumagin in Vitebsk, and Street of Partisan Alexander Berkovich in Pinsk.

Rivers, seas and oceans are ploughed by cargo and passenger ships named after Jews—prominent political and public figures, leading cultural and scientific workers, war and labour heroes.

CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Contribution to Multinational Soviet Culture—Books in Russian and Yiddish by Jewish Authors—The Journal **Sovietish Heimland**—Jewish Theatres and Ensembles—Jewish Music

In 1947, on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution, the distinguished Jewish poet and writer Itzik Fefer wrote an article entitled "Resurgence", which gives a vivid picture of the great changes that had taken place in the life of Soviet Jews during 30 years of Soviet rule.

"If any of us had fallen asleep thirty years ago to awaken now," he wrote, "he would not believe that he had slept for only 30, not 300 years, because he would see so many new things around. He would, of course, be stunned to see the Moscow Metro, Dneproges [the Dnieper hydroelectric station], the vast fields, the new canals connecting seas and rivers and the towns that have arisen in the desert. He would be amazed and find it incredible that all this was the fruit of the labours of a single generation. But more than anything else his own people—the people of the former Jewish Pale—would kindle his admiration. Their cultural, moral and mental outlook has changed beyond recognition."

Indeed, far-reaching social and economic changes, the establishment of the Soviet way of life, the coming together of nations, voluntary nat-

ural assimilation, the demographic changes that have taken place among the Jewish population of the USSR over the past half a century have largely determined the course of its cultural progress.

The works of the writers Samuil Marshak, Ilya Ehrenburg, Pavel Antokolsky, Vera Inber, Agniya Barto, Eduard Bagritsky, Isaac Babel, Emmanuil Kazakevich, Mikhail Svetlov, Semyon Kirsanov, Boris Slutsky and Natan Rybak have won universal recognition from Soviet people and many readers abroad.

Violinists David Oistrakh and Leonid Kogan, Lenin and State prize winners, are world-renowned. Maya Plisetskaya, outstanding ballerina of our day, eminent film makers Mikhail Romm, Mark Donskoi, Grigori Roshal and Roman Karmen, Bolshoi Theatre bass Mark Reisen, doyen of Soviet jazz Leonid Utesov, the popular stage comedian and satirist Arkadi Raikin, leading actors Maxim Shtraukh, Mark Prudkin and Elina Bystritskaya won respect and admiration not only in the USSR, but in other countries too.

Since 1967 some 271 books by Jewish authors have been published in Yiddish in the USSR in a total print of 1,800,000 copies. Among these are novels and stories by Note Lurie, Iossif Rabin, Ikhil Falikman, Natan Zabara, Grigori Polyanker, Itzik Kipnis, Ikhil Shraibman, Irma Druker, Shira Gorshman, Rivka Rubina and Alexander Gubnitsky, and poems by Aaron Vergelis, Abram Gontar, Ovsei Driz, Moisei Teif, Dora Khaikina, Riva Balyasnaya, Mendel Lifshits and Matvei Talalayevsky. In 1980 alone, for instance, 24 books appeared in Yiddish in mass editions.

It should be mentioned that thanks to translations into the languages of other peoples inhabit-

ing the USSR the works of Soviet Jewish writers have become a part of Soviet culture in general. Books by Soviet Jewish authors are put out by publishing houses in the Ukraine, Byelorussia, Moldavia and other Union republics in their national languages. Thus in the past 20 years the Soviet Writer Publishing House in Moscow put out in Russian 105 books by Jewish authors in editions totalling 3,131,300 copies. In that same period it published 85 books in Yiddish. From 1968 to 1980 altogether 148 books by Jewish authors were translated into Russian and published in editions totalling 29,200,000 copies.

Jewish classics are widely published. The works of Shalom Aleichem, for instance, have been translated in the USSR into 24 languages in editions totalling 9,500,000 copies. The works of Itzik Perets have been published in 50 editions and those of Mendele Moicher Sforim in 33 editions.

The works of the older generation of Soviet Jewish writers have been given a new lease of life. Among them are the works of Lev Kvitko, David Bergelson, Itzik Fefer, Perets Markish, Der Nistor, Aaron Kushnirov, Samuil Galkin, Ezro Fininberg, David Gofshtein, Aaron Gurshtein, Yekhezkl Dobrushin and Matvei Gartsman.

In the last few years Soviet Jewish prose has been enriched with many works which have been received favourably not only by Soviet readers, but also those of other countries. These include the Yiddish novels *Black Wind* by Ikhil Falikman, *Years of Youth* by Khaim Melamud, *On the Banks of the Niemen*, *Khvele Nefan*, and *I see You*, *Vilnius* by Iossif Rabin, *The Sky and Land* by Note Lurie, *The Baker from Kolomyia*, *Stronger Than Steel* and *Itzkhok Santos and His Descendants* by Grigori Polyanker, *Spring* by Samuil Gordon, *Our*

Days by Terye Ghen and *The Day Is Still Long* by Natan Zabara. Most of these works appeared simultaneously in Russian each in editions of not less than 100,000 copies.

Jewish poetry has always held a leading place in Soviet poetry. The collection of poems, *Horizons*, which appeared in 1965, gives a good idea of Jewish poets who came to the fore in the early sixties. It is almost an anthology of contemporary Jewish poetry. The 50 poets represented in it have shown that they are worthy heirs and continuers of the traditions established by the founders of Soviet Jewish poetry—O. Shvartzman, David Gofshtein, Perets Markish, Lev Kvitko, Aaron Kushnirov, M. Kulbak, Itzik Fefer, Iza Kharik, Ezro Fininberg and Samuil Galkin. Contemporary Soviet Jewish poetry is marked by the same features as classic Soviet poetry in general—feelings of Soviet patriotism, love and respect for folklore and a keen interest in the main problems of the day.

With the founding of the Yiddish-language journal *Sovietish Heimland* in 1961 a new period in the development of Soviet Jewish literature began. Over 100 writers, poets, literary critics and scholars, journalists, many art critics and artists contribute to the journal, which is published by the Union of Soviet Writers.

In the 20 years since its foundation the journal has published 55 novels, 75 stories, 1,075 short stories, 25 plays, 63 long poems, 5,606 short poems and ballads, 235 feature articles, and 1,098 articles of literary criticism. In the same period about 50 works by Russian, Ukrainian, Byelorussian, Moldavian, Georgian and Latvian authors have appeared in it. It also regularly publishes the best

works of US, Israeli, French, Argentinian and Canadian writers.

Since *Sovietish Heimland* started publication, poets of striking talent, such as Moisei Teif, Matvei Grubian, Ovsei Driz, Aaron Vergelis, Abram Gontar and Isaac Borukhovich, have flowered. Each has not only his own range of subjects and his own original approach to problems, but also a distinctive artistic style and imagery. Alongside the older poets several younger poets, such as David Bromberg, Abram Katsev, Pinya Kirichansky, Misha Mogilevich and Khaim Gurovich, have been contributing increasingly to the journal.

Its editors pay special attention to the publication of a monthly book supplement. Since January 1980 subscribers to the journal have been receiving a small book with each issue. These supplements constitute what is known as the *Sovietish Heimland* Library. It includes several books of sketches and feature stories by living Jewish writers, journalistic articles, documentary materials and the texts of songs with the music.

Apart from literature, progress has been made in other fields of Soviet Jewish culture, especially in music and the theatre.

There are Jewish theatre companies in various cities of the Soviet Union. The Jewish Chamber Music Theatre directed by Yuri Sherling is very popular. Founded several years ago, its main aim is to preserve and develop Jewish folk traditions. The revival of old dances and songs called for actors with a thorough all-round training. For this reason the troupe is made up of graduates from conservatoires, ballet schools and theatre institutes.

The theatre's very first performances in Moscow attracted attention not only from the Yiddish-

speaking public. The central government newspaper *Izvestia* wrote in a very favourable review in 1980 that the young company displayed a high degree of professional skill combined with great sincerity. The paper expressed the wish that the new theatre would take a worthy place among the national theatre companies of the multinational Soviet Union.

Performances by the Jewish Chamber Music Theatre have been well received in all the Soviet cities and towns it has visited on tour. This success is due not only to the talent of its young actors and musicians, but also to that of its director, Yuri Sherling, who has wide professional experience. He is a graduate of the Bolshoi Theatre ballet school and a music school (in the composition class), and has completed the advanced course of study for producers at the Lunacharsky State Institute of Drama.

Yuri Sherling has staged *Black Bridle for a White Mare*, a rock opera, in which he plays the leading male role. Theatre critics have described the production as a true gem of Soviet music.

Another production, *Lomir ale ineinem* (Let's sing to the bride and bridegroom), packed with robust Jewish humour, is equally successful. It includes very popular Jewish songs and dances, ranging from the "Lomir ale" song which gives the show its title and ending with the ebullient "Freilex". To see these shows one must spend hours on end in the queue for tickets.

The company is now working on a play with a historical theme, entitled *Bar Coch* (Son of a Star).

Along with professional troupes, amateur theatrical and music companies are also popular. These are supported by cultural organisations and trade

unions. Among them is the Birobidzhan People's (Amateur) Jewish Theatre, which celebrated its 15th anniversary in 1980. Composed mainly of young people, it is directed by Basya Shpilman, a Jewish theatre veteran. Its repertoire includes both classic and modern plays.

The Vilnius People's (Amateur) Jewish Theatre, also mainly consisting of young performers, marked its 25th anniversary with considerable achievements. Its performances have aroused much interest not only in the capital of Soviet Lithuania. The troupe has given performances in other Baltic republics, Byelorussia and Leningrad. Its concert programmes, its choir and dance group, and its jazz band have attracted special attention.

Music plays a big part in Soviet Jewish culture. There are many Jewish composers of great note, such as Lev Yampolsky, Lev Pulver, Zinovy Kompaneyets, Riva Boyarskaya, Samuil Senderei, Oti-liya Likhtenshtein, Matvei Tabachnikov, Lev Birov and Solomon Faintukh.

The composer Zinovy Kompaneyets, well known both in the USSR and abroad, has been writing music for over 50 years. The author of many rhapsodies and vocal works he has done a great deal to popularise national Jewish music. He compiled a collection entitled *New Jewish Songs*, an anthology of recent works of Soviet Jewish composers. In a foreword to the collection the famous Soviet composer Dmitri Shostakovich wrote:

"The appearance of new, distinctively national songs is always a source of joy to me. Jewish folk music is unique in its emotional resonance. Its echoes can be found in the works of many great world composers. Today Jewish folk music is alive and developing. The present collection, which in-

cludes recent works of Soviet composers, attests to this. I wish the new Jewish songs every success."

The USSR regularly issues records of popular musical works based on Jewish themes. In 1981 alone the Melodiya record company issued Sergei Prokofiyev's *Overture on Jewish Themes* performed by the USSR State Symphony Orchestra and Dmitri Shostakovich's song cycle based on Jewish folk poems, as well as a two-record album of the rock opera *Black Bridle for a White Mare*.

"JEWISH EDUCATION" OR EDUCATED JEWS!

False Western Notions—Why Have Jewish Schools Disappeared?—Leading Place in Education and Science—Soviet School of Hebrew Studies

The main theme of anti-Soviet, Zionist and Western capitalist propaganda is the allegation that in the USSR there is discrimination against Jews in education and science. Let us look at the most typical anti-Soviet accusations made by Bernard Levin in his articles published in the London *Times* in February 1980. Apart from the stock charges of "official" or "state antisemitism" he presented "an analysis of the discriminatory policy" of the Soviet authorities with regard to Jews in education and science.

Though claiming to be an "authority on Soviet Russia", he juggles with statistics and quotes non-existent "facts". On this basis he draws the sad conclusion that Jewish education is banned in the USSR. He writes:

"There are now increasingly severe restrictions on the admission of Jews as students in Soviet institutions of higher education... and the decline in the number of Jewish students has become steadily steeper..."

"There is not a single school anywhere in the country which teaches Hebrew... as part of its curriculum. No books in Hebrew are produced in the Soviet Union... It is possible to learn Hebrew

in the Soviet Union, *but not for Jews!* (Some Russian Orthodox seminary scholars are permitted to study the language for biblical purposes.)...

"The other Jewish language, Yiddish, fares no better."

Let us look at these allegations in the light of the historical facts.

In the early years after the October 1917 Revolution all the areas where Jews lived had a network of general education and vocational schools at which teaching was in Yiddish. The reason was that the masses of Jews whom the tsarist authorities had forced to live in ghettos (the Pale) did not know at all or hardly knew Russian and the other languages spoken by the people among whom they lived.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s hundreds of thousands of Jews moved from the former ghetto areas. As a result, attendance dwindled at schools where the teaching was in Yiddish. So these schools were closed down one after another.

Another important point is that many Jewish families deliberately sent their children to Russian, Ukrainian, Byelorussian or other schools. They regarded this as a manifestation of their equality, because in tsarist Russia the admission of Jews to educational establishments was limited. Moreover, they took the view that attendance at these schools gave their children broader opportunities.

We are entitled to ask: "Have Jewish educational establishments expanded in other countries?" Not at all. Take the city of New York, for instance, which has a larger Jewish population (approximately two million) than the whole of the Soviet Union. Less than six per cent of the Jewish children in New York get a "Jewish education".

It is worth noting that the American Jewish Council has expressed the opinion that "Jewish education" often boils down to pro-Israeli, nationalistic Zionist indoctrination. It is mainly the children of the poorer families and of conservative adherents of traditional Judaism that get a "Jewish education".

Would it be fair to say that the absence of Jewish schools has adversely affected the level of education of Soviet citizens of Jewish origin? The answer is given by statistics. Today the USSR leads the world in respect of the proportion of the Jewish population with a higher education. Nearly 25 per cent of Soviet Jews have a higher or specialised secondary education.

In the 1978/79 academic year there were 329 students per 10,000 Jewish inhabitants (as compared with 311 in the 1977/78 academic year). The Soviet Jewish community has a higher proportion of students than any other nation or nationality in the USSR. In this they are ahead of the Russians, Ukrainians and Byelorussians. The average for the USSR is 196 students per 10,000 inhabitants.

It should be pointed out that the absolute number of Jewish specialists with a higher education who are employed in all spheres of state and public life is also increasing every year. The figure was 291,000 in 1960, 357,000 in 1970, 375,000 in 1973, 385,000 in 1975, 389,000 in 1977 and 395,000 in 1978. So far as the number of Jews with a higher education in proportion to the size of the Jewish population is concerned, the USSR is ahead of all Western countries and ahead of Israel too.

Of the 64,800 Jewish scientific workers 4,200 have the advanced degree of Doctor of Science

and 25,200 that of Candidate of Science. This means that 45.4 per cent of all Jewish scientific workers have higher qualifications.

In the period from 1941 to 1980 among the winners of Lenin and State prizes in science and technology the proportion of Jews was 10.8 and 12.1 per cent respectively.

Jews occupy a prominent place in the pleiad of Soviet scientists of world renown. Among them were such distinguished theorists as Lev Landau and Abram Yoffe. The names of Jewish scientists who are members of the USSR Academy of Sciences and of academies of sciences in other countries are well known in the Soviet Union and abroad. Among them are Semyon Volfkovich (chemist), who is an authority on mineral fertiliser, Isaac Mints (historian), Gersh Budker (nuclear physicist), Alexander Mints (radio engineer), Bentzion Vul (laser physicist), Israil Gelfand (mathematician), coauthor of a mathematical method of biological research, Alexander Grinberg (chemist), Alexander Frumkin (physical chemist), Yuli Khariton (nuclear physicist) and Yakov Zeldovich (nuclear physicist), who have been awarded the title of Hero of Socialist Labour three times.

The reader can see that the facts refute the lies about discrimination against Soviet Jews in education and science. Soviet Jews freely have chosen not a "Jewish education" but the path of diversified knowledge which the Soviet state has opened to all citizens regardless of nationality.

Like members of other nationality they are free to study, and do in fact study, Hebrew history, culture and philology. It is worth noting that the level of knowledge achieved in these fields in the USSR refutes another Zionist accusation that the

Soviet Union "discriminates" against the study of Hebrew history, philology and culture.

Soviet scholars are doing extensive research in ancient Hebrew history, culture and philology. Such research is being undertaken at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the USSR Academy of Sciences and the Palestinian Society of Russia, which is attached to the USSR Academy of Sciences and is one of the oldest societies of its kind in Europe—it celebrated its centenary in 1982. Institutes of Oriental studies and leading universities in the various republics of the USSR also devote serious attention to these questions.

Soviet scholars engaged in Hebrew studies have inherited the fine progressive traditions of their predecessors in pre-revolutionary Russia. Academician Pavel Konstantinovich Kokovtsev (1861-1942), a distinguished scholar in Semitic studies, a Hebraist and Arabist, embodied these traditions.

A feature of Soviet Hebrew studies is their consistent adherence to historical method as a principle of Marxist methodology. Soviet Hebrew scholars are well known for their broad scientific outlook which manifests itself in the organic linking of Hebrew studies with general Semitics, Arabic philology, in particular, as well as with related disciplines—classical (Latin and Greek) philology, studies of Oriental ancient history, the history of religions and myths and so on. They keep abreast of all advances in Semitics at home and abroad. This is clearly to be seen in Soviet Hebrew studies published in the 30 postwar years, especially the work of scholars of the older generation—Professor Isaac Vinnikov and Professor Bentsion Grande in linguistics, and Yudel Solodukho in history.



The Pentateuch (X-XI centuries) found in the Synagogue in the Georgian village of Lailashi.



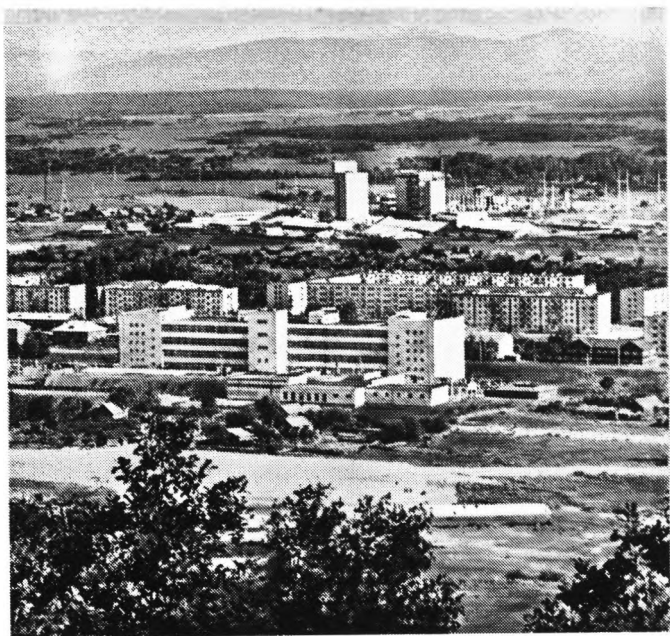
Yakov Sverdlov (1885-1919), one of Lenin's close associates and the first president of the Soviet Republic.



Babi Yar in Kiev, site of a monument to the victims of a nazi massacre at the beginning of the Great Patriotic War (1941-45). Many of the victims were Jews.

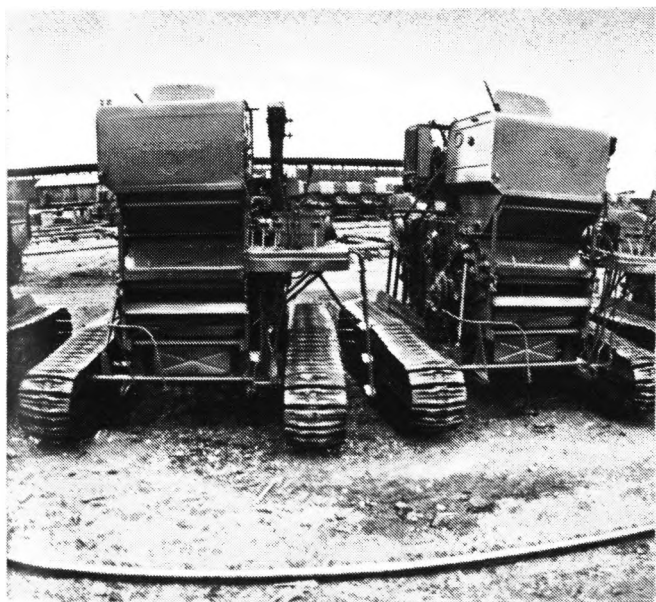


Among the numerous visitors to the monument are men and women who miraculously escaped the mass execution.



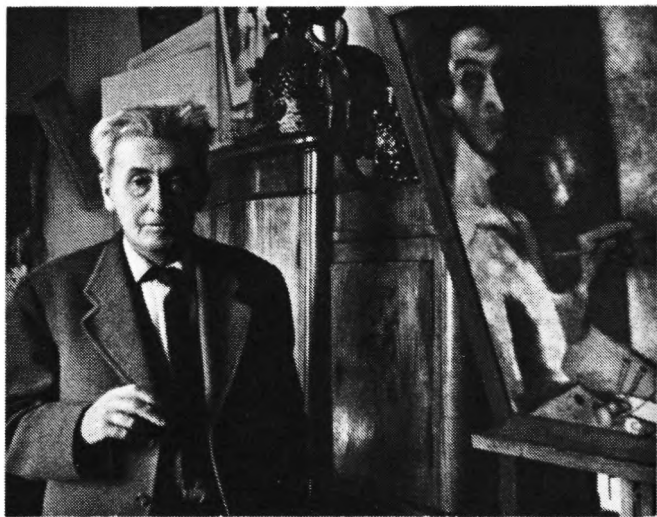
Birobidzhan is the capital of the Jewish Autonomous Region.

These rice-harvesting combines are made by Dalselmash, a farm machinery plant in Birobidzhan.





Alexander Chakovsky,
Editor-in-Chief of the
popular weekly newspaper
Literaturnaya gazeta, Hero
of Socialist Labour, and the
author of many books.





On the eve of the anniversary of the victory over Nazi Germany, Hermann Fogg, military attaché of the German Democratic Republic, awarded the republic's medal to Colonel-General David Dragunsky, twice Hero of the Soviet Union.

The works of Soviet veteran writer Ilya Ehrenburg, shown here in his Moscow flat, are published in many languages.





On June 6, 1983, the Anti-Zionist Committee of Soviet Public Opinion held its first press conference for Soviet and foreign journalists in Moscow. In the picture: the presidium at the press conference.



The historical drama *Bar Kokh* at the Jewish Chamber Music Theatre.

The audience is spellbound—on stage is the famous ballerina Maya Plisetskaya, a Lenin prize winner.





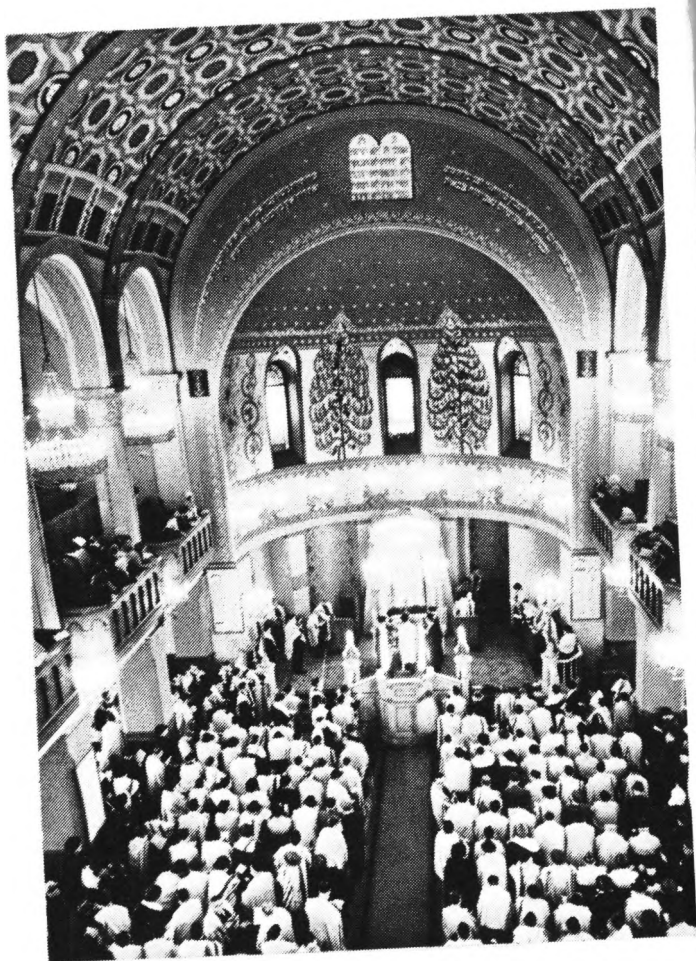
The keen satire of Arkady Raikin, People's Artist of the USSR, attracts capacity audiences not only in this country, but also abroad.



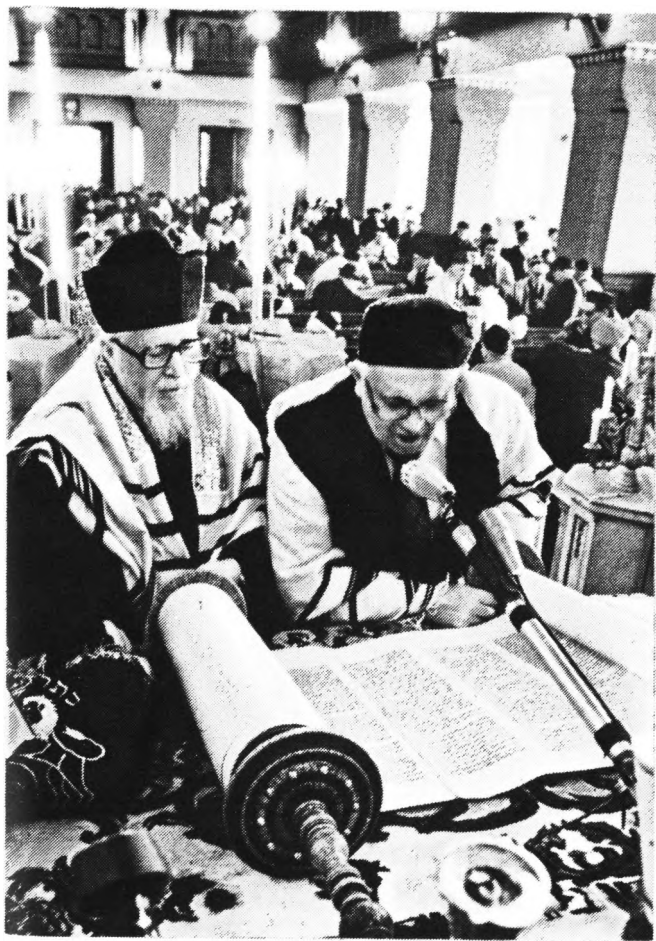
A collection of ancient Jewish poetry published in Tbilisi.



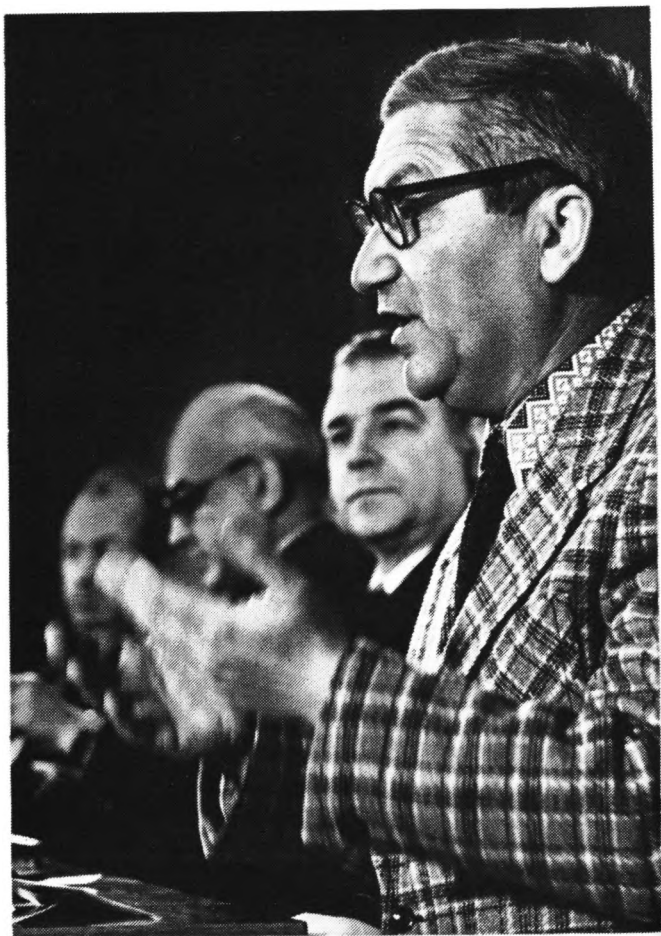
Conducting in the Grand Hall of the Moscow Conservatory is David Oistrakh, People's Artist of the USSR. The violin soloist is his son Igor.



Inside the Moscow Choral Synagogue.



The late Rabbi Yakov Fishman conducting a service in the Moscow Choral Synagogue.



At a press conference in Moscow former Soviet citizens of Jewish nationality who have returned to the Soviet Union tell a dramatic story of their emigrant life in Israel.

The succeeding generation of Soviet Hebrew scholars naturally devoted special attention to the Dead Sea Scrolls, especially their social, economic and ideological aspects. The high quality of these Soviet studies is internationally recognised. Many Soviet scientific papers on this subject have been reprinted in specialist publications abroad.

Dr. Giller Livshits, a historian specialising in Jewish history during the Hellenistic period and under the Roman Empire, has published two monographs, *Class Struggle in Judea and Uprisings against Rome*, and *Essays on the Historiography of the Bible and Early Christianity*.

Dr. Ugu Mazing is studying problems related to Biblical texts and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Seventy-nine-year-old Iossif Braginsky, a specialist in Persian literature, is also engaged in Hebrew studies. As editor of the first volume in the Library of World Literature series he included in it his own translation of *The Book of Ruth* in 1974.

"This book has always fascinated me by its internationalist spirit, to use a contemporary term," says Iossif Braginsky. "The beautiful heroine of the story, so lovingly described by the ancient author, was a Moabite, not an Israelite, in other words, she was an alien. It follows from this that, alongside the anti-humanist myth about 'God's chosen people', other views existed in Hebrew culture, ideas of the brotherhood of all peoples. Like the culture of all nations, Ancient Hebrew culture was marked by a clash between humanist and anti-humanist currents."

After the Second World War another Soviet centre of Hebrew studies was established at the Georgian Academy of Sciences. In Georgia Hebrew studies have deep roots because it was in

Georgia that the earliest Jewish communities appeared on what is now USSR territory. For many years such studies were conducted in Georgia under the guidance of Georgi Tsereteli (1904-73), a member of the USSR Academy of Sciences, and an eminent Semitics scholar. One of his first works was an article entitled *Hebrew Inscription Rediscovered in Mtskheta* and one of the last was *On the Tbilisi Scrolls of the Pentateuch*.

His many pupils are now furthering Hebrew studies in Georgia.

Yiddish has already been dealt with in detail in the preceding chapter. Because it is widely spoken among Soviet Jews many periodicals are published in Yiddish, including the journal *Sovietish Heimland*. We might add that since the autumn of 1981 advanced literary courses have been opened for young authors, including those who write in Yiddish, at the Gorky Institute of World Literature in Moscow. Young poets, prose writers, journalists, literary critics and editorial staff members can improve their writing skill by attending these courses.

Among the first students attending them were Boris Sandler, a short story writer from Kishinev, Moishe Pens, a writer from Makhachkala, and Alexander Brodsky and Lev Braginsky, both poets living in Moscow.

That is a true picture of the place of Soviet Jews in education and science.

PRACTICING JEWS

Historical Features—Lenin's Decree on Separation of the Church from the State—Sociological Research Findings—Moscow's Choral Synagogue

To understand the place of Judaism among other faiths in the USSR it is necessary to look at the historical circumstances surrounding its status both before and after the October 1917 Revolution.

Before 1917 the mass of the Jewish population, who were deprived of rights and poverty-stricken, sought to keep to itself, to form a caste, as it were. To some extent the Jewish religion itself fostered this. In such circumstances the Jewish religious community, naturally, exercised a powerful influence on various aspects of the life of Jews in Russia, on the education and upbringing of children, on family and marital relations. Among them many sincerely believed that the only way to salvation from all calamities and misfortunes was faith in their God.

But even then the more enlightened sections of Jewish working people realised that the only path to the emancipation and equality of their people was that of revolutionary struggle together with all the other peoples of the Russian Empire against tsarist autocracy, and not the path of religious segregation. Tens of thousands of Jews

joined the ranks of revolutionaries fighting against autocracy.

On January 20, 1918, soon after Soviet rule had been established, a fundamental decree was passed separating the Russian Orthodox Church from the state. This document of the young Soviet state secured genuine freedom of conscience for all the citizens of Russia. To profess a religion or not to profess any religion at all was now the personal affair of each individual. Believers now enjoyed the right of free worship and non-believers the right of freely proclaiming their atheist views. Information or queries about a person's religion were deleted from all official forms.

It is difficult to exaggerate the importance of this decree. Millions of people who had attended services at church, synagogue or mosque, who had performed religious rites in order to demonstrate their "trustworthiness" and to consolidate their "standing in society" were now able to free their consciences. Those for whom religious observance had been a pretence began to give up religion. This was an inevitable natural process. It affected all religions in Russia without exception, including Judaism. Another factor prompted Jews to abandon Judaism: after the revolution Jews were granted the same rights and opportunities as all the other peoples of Russia. Now reliably protected by Soviet law, many of them no longer needed the comfort they had formerly derived from religion. Jews began to move from the former ghetto areas and to settle where they pleased. So not only their territorial ties, but also their spiritual bonds with Jewish religious communities were weakened.

Later such factors as the rising cultural level of the population, progress in education, to which

all had access, and the advancement of science led many Jews and other former believers to abandon religion. It should be mentioned that this process is not unique to the USSR. It is characteristic of all developed countries without exception. In the US, for instance, where "believing in God" can considerably affect a person's standing in society, a survey of Jews showed that only 40 per cent affirmed their adherence to Judaism. These were the findings of a Gallup poll published in *News-week* on March 1, 1971.

In the USSR there are no official statistical data on the numbers of believers professing different faiths. So one can judge how religious the Jewish population is only on the basis of sociological surveys and attendances at services in synagogues. A sociological survey conducted several years ago in Bobruisk, a town in Byelorussia, showed that only two per cent of the Jews polled regarded themselves as believers. Though this may seem a small figure, it coincides quite closely with the data on attendances at synagogues during major Jewish festivals, such as the New Year, Judgment Day and Passover. A sociological survey in Novosibirsk, which has a Jewish population of 11,000, showed that from 100 to 200 people, or from one to two per cent, attend services at the synagogue on religious festivals, in Kuibyshev with a Jewish population of 16,000 synagogue attendance is 150-450, or from one to three per cent, and in Leningrad with a Jewish population of 160,000 (according to the 1970 census) from 2,000 to 2,500 attend the synagogue, or about 1.5 per cent.

Not all believers attend services at the synagogue, of course. But then not all those who go to the synagogue are believers. Some come to honour

the memory of deceased parents or to meet acquaintances.

Sociological surveys have also revealed that the degree of religiosity varies among ethnic groups of Jews. The most devout believers are to be found among the Georgian, Bukhara (Central Asian) and Highland Jews.

As distinct from other Jews, believers in these ethnic groups strictly adhere to traditional customs and rites. In Tbilisi, which has a Jewish population as large as that of Kuibyshev, you will see from eight to ten times more believers attending services at the synagogue on religious festivals. But even though the religiosity of these groups of Jews is rather high—not, however, exceeding 20 per cent—the number of really devout Jews in the Soviet Union as a whole is about 60,000.

Who are they? Among the Jews living in the European part of the USSR they are mainly old-age pensioners. There are few believers among young and even middle-aged people.

Even the older believers are free of religious fanaticism. As a rule, they do not object to their children or grandchildren marrying non-Jews, though they all profess Orthodox Judaism.

An absolute majority of believers do not light Passover candles, do not observe the Sabbath laws, do not always circumcise their sons or grandsons, do not strictly adhere to the laws on kosher food and do not observe fasts, and bury their dead in coffins fully-dressed.

There are 92 synagogues functioning today in the USSR. Eighty of them are in premises the state has made available to believers free of charge for an indefinite term. The other synagogues occupy rented buildings. In some parts of the country there are also small groups of believers

(known as minyans) consisting of 10 to 20 or even sometimes 30 believers who meet irregularly for services, mostly on major religious festivals. The number of these groups fluctuates.

In areas with large numbers of believers, although the Jewish population may be relatively small, there are several synagogues. There are 26 synagogues in Georgia, for instance.

Every year before Passover the Jewish religious communities bake matzos. Matzos is sold not only to members of the congregation, but to all who wish to purchase it. Every year more than 100 tons of matzos are baked. There are also poultry slaughter yards at the synagogues and shops which sell kosher meat.

The Soviet state has never objected to the establishment of a Judaist centre or board. Since there is now no connection between church and state, the organisation of such a body depends entirely on the initiative of the clergy and the believers.¹ At present the Moscow Choral Synagogue performs the function of an ecclesiastical centre recognised by all the Jewish religious communities in the Soviet Union.

The synagogue has a rather curious history. It was built in 1890 when the Moscow chief of police gave his verbal consent to a plan approved by the office of the Moscow *gubernia*, or provincial administration. Up to that time there had been five small Jewish meeting houses which could accommodate only a few hundred worshippers at a time. An important requirement was that the synagogue should not be higher than the surrounding buildings. The gifted architect Eiboschitz, who designed several monumental ad-

¹ It is worth noting that, though several hundred synagogues and many influential Jewish religious communities existed in old Russia, all attempts to form a Judaist centre failed because of the resistance put up by rabbis in the localities who did not wish to be subordinated to anybody.

ministrative and commercial buildings in Moscow, skilfully evaded this requirement by making use of the fairly steep slope of the short street where it was to be built. Though the synagogue building was monumental—it had a magnificent colonnade—and stood halfway down the street, it was not, of course, taller than the buildings at the top end of the street. But nevertheless, as soon as the synagogue was completed, the authorities said that the splendid dome must be removed. This was done without delay. But the synagogue was not opened because it had allegedly been built "unlawfully"—the chief of police went back on his word.

Rabbi Minor and Shneider, the head of the congregation, who insisted on the opening of the synagogue, were exiled from Moscow by decree of Tsar Alexander III. The community was told to sell the building by January 1, 1893, or to hand it over to a charitable body.

After that the synagogue premises were occupied in turn by a vocational school, a Talmud-Torah two-year Jewish school and a hospital. In the intervals between changes of signboards the building lay vacant. Only 15 years later, in June 1906, at the peak of the revolutionary events of 1905-07, was official permission finally given to use the building as a synagogue.

It has a large hall for worship accommodating 2,000 people, with balconies for the women. It is decorated with majolica, mozaic panels and gilt bronze patterns. There is also a small hall for worship, a *mikvah* (a ritual pool), a poultry slaughter room and a kosher kitchen. Not far from the synagogue, also in the centre of the city, there is a mechanised matzos bakery.

At the synagogue there is a *yeshivah* (a Jewish rabbinical school). Five students are studying there. Four other students from the Moscow congregation are attending the Higher Rabbi Seminary in Budapest, one of the most prestigious in Europe.

The present full-time staff of the synagogue consists of 37 people. There are two rabbis, head of the board of the congregation, two members of the board, two cantors, a butcher, a kosher cook

and four shammashim (two men and two women custodians). Charwomen, electricians and technicians see to the cleaning and maintenance of the building so the synagogue can function normally.

The Jewish community in Moscow has many friends in Western countries. Among them is Rabbi Arthur Schneyer of New York, who is a leader of the progressive organisation "Appeal to Conscience". Other friends are Rabbi Teitz of Elizabeth, New Jersey (US) and Rabbi Gechtman of Montreal (Canada). They have repeatedly visited the USSR as guests of the Jewish religious community in Moscow and other cities and towns. Representatives of the Moscow Jewish community have frequently been guests of Jewish communities in other countries. The Moscow Choral Synagogue maintains contacts also with Jewish communities in Western Europe and Israel.

Every year the Moscow Choral Synagogue publishes a religious calendar. In 1979 the first five books of the Old Testament (*Humash*) were issued in a large edition. In 1980 the *Siddur* was republished for the third time in the past ten years. It is the *Peace Prayer Book* which was edited and annotated by Yehuda Leib Levin, the late Chief Rabbi of the Moscow Choral Synagogue.

All these books are printed at state printing works in fulfilment of orders placed by the synagogue. The appropriate contracts are signed with the assistance of the Council for Religious Affairs under the USSR Council of Ministers.

This enables the synagogue to provide all the members of its congregation with religious publications and ritual items, such as tallith—prayer shawls, tefillins and mezuzahs, which the synagogue receives from fraternal communities in so-

cialist countries in exchange for religious publications.

The synagogue supplies many other Jewish religious communities in the USSR with religious publications and ritual items. Taking into account the fact that the overwhelming majority of believers are elderly people, that is to say, pensioners, the board of the synagogue fixes minimum prices for religious literature and ritual items. Thus, the first five books of the Old Testament (*Humash*) cost ten roubles, the *Siddur* prayer book five roubles, a tallith 15 roubles and a tefillin five roubles. For the sake of comparison one should note that in the US a tallith or tefillin costs from 200 to 300 dollars.

When the Board of the Moscow Choral Synagogue sends religious literature and ritual items to other religious communities in the USSR it charges only 50 per cent of the retail price to enable those communities to build up their funds.

These are the facts. Clearly there is no foundation for the allegations spread by the Zionists that Judaism in the USSR is still a target of particularly humiliating anti-religious propaganda.

Soviet state and public organisations, like individuals, enjoy the constitutional right of conducting anti-religious propaganda and proclaiming atheist views. But in the USSR atheistic propaganda bears the nature of a reasoned discussion invariably showing respect for the believers' feelings.

THE JEWISH AUTONOMOUS REGION

Practical Right to National Self-Determination—Economic Development—Social Achievements—Cultural Progress—Extension of Rights of Jewish Autonomous Region

On May 7, 1934, the All-Union Central Executive Committee passed a decision on the founding of a Jewish Autonomous Region (JAR). Autonomous national regions were founded in accordance with Lenin's national policy. The purpose was to give nationalities small in size an opportunity to engage in political life and to promote their rapid economic and social progress, the rebirth of their distinctive national culture, the development of their own written languages and the publication of books and newspapers in the national tongue.

The formation of the Jewish Autonomous Region was an event of special significance. This was the first Jewish state for 2,000 years. For the first time since the dispersion of the Jews in the 6th century B.C. Jews were able to exercise in practice their right to national self-determination.

Situated in the Soviet Far East, the Jewish Autonomous Region forms part of the Khabarovsk Territory in the Russian Federation. Surrounded by the picturesque mountains of the Smaller Khingan range the region stretches along the mighty Amur River and is bordered by the watershed of its tributaries—the Bira and the Bidzhan. It has

an area of 36,000 square kilometres—larger than Belgium, for instance. The population is 197,000 and the main centre is Birobidzhan.

Though the overwhelming majority of Jews preferred to move to the bigger cities after the abolition of the infamous Pale, hundreds of families of Jewish settlers had moved to that area by the time the Jewish Autonomous Region was formed.

Many Russians, Ukrainians, Buryats and people of other nationalities settled there together with Jews. So it became a multinational region.

In the early 1930s the region had several hunting and fishing co-operatives and about a dozen semi-artisan enterprises. Since then, assisted by other fraternal peoples, the Jewish Autonomous Region has made major progress in developing its economy. It has built up engineering, electrical engineering, mining and building materials industries, which now occupy a leading place in its economy.

Today the Jewish Autonomous Region has over 50 big modern factories and plants. The Dalselmash (Far Eastern Farm Machinery) plant in Birobidzhan manufactures self-propelled crawler rice-grain and silage combine harvesters of unique design. Collective and state farms in many parts of the Soviet Union, as well as Cuba, Mexico, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Iraq, eagerly buy these machines. A main design bureau has been set up in the city of Birobidzhan specially to work on farm machinery for East Siberia and the Soviet Far East. There are other industries in Birobidzhan: a hosiery and knitwear factory—the biggest in the Soviet Far East, producing 39 million pairs of stockings and socks a year, a textile-garment factory, a knitwear factory and two footwear factories. The local power plant has been expanded

with the addition of two new departments. A large-panel housing construction workshop has been put into operation. A stadium seating 14,000 and named the *Stroitel* (Builder) has been opened, and six gymnasiums have been built in the city. New residential neighbourhoods with modern blocks of flats have appeared in Birobidzhan and other places too.

The region also has 37 state farms, a poultry factory, two big collective farms and an experimental agricultural and land improvement station. The state has given them the use of 667,000 hectares.

In the last ten years investments in the economy of the region have doubled. The region has built big stock-raising complexes and modernised and expanded some of its industries. The first section of a motor vehicle repair works for the Baikal-Amur Mainline railway (BAM)—a great project of this century—is about to be put into operation.

People of many nationalities are living and working together there as a close-knit family. Russians, Ukrainians, Byelorussians and others are living together with Jews and are working fruitfully in all sectors of the economy. Many Jews have won high prestige and recognition by their selfless labour and active participation in public life. Khaya Karasik, a worker at the textile garment factory, has been honoured with the title of Hero of Socialist Labour. Saveli Gleiser, a team leader at the Birobidzhanstroi building organisation, has been awarded the Order of the October Revolution and the Order of the Red Banner of Labour. The chairman of the Birobidzhan City Peace Committee is Vera Gleiser, Merited Teacher

of the Russian Federation, who has been awarded the Order of Lenin.

Many of the leading posts in the regional committee of the Communist Party, in sectors and departments of the executive committee of the regional Soviet of People's Deputies are held by Jews. They also head big factories, plants and construction organisations. The only plant in the USSR which manufactures caterpillar combine harvesters is headed by E. Lipovetsky, who holds the advanced degree of Candidate of Technological Sciences. The manager of the power transformer plant is L. Kogan and of the footwear factory—Y. Shnaiderman. The chairman of the *Zavety Ilyicha* (Lenin's Behests) Collective Farm, which has an income exceeding one million roubles, is F. Glikshtein.

Today one in every three persons in the region is engaged in some sort of study.

Every village has a club, library and film projector. Two newspapers are published in the region—*Birobidzhanskaya zvezda* (Birobidzhan Star) in Russian and *Birobidzhaner stern* in Yiddish, Radio Birobidzhan regularly broadcasts in Yiddish and Russian. TV sets receive programmes from Moscow and other Soviet cities, as well as Intervision programmes.

Jewish literature and the arts have made progress in the Jewish Autonomous Region. Excellent stories about the working people of the region by Meyer Alberton and David Bergelson, Samuil Gordon, and Samuil Godiner, and many short stories by Ikhil Falkiman, Terye Ghen, Khaim Melamud, Iossif Rabin, Grigory Bolshtein and Der Nistor have become classics of Jewish Soviet literature. Jewish poets, such as Perets Markish, David Gofshtein, Samuil Galkin, Ezro Fininberg, Boris Olev-

sky, Itzik Fefer, Lev Reznik, Aaron Kushnirov and Iza Kharik, have also written about Birobidzhan.

Birobidzhan has nurtured a whole pleiad of Jewish prose writers including Boris Miller, David Goldstein, G. Rabnikov and S. Borzhes and of poets including Emmanuil Kazakevich, Lyubov Vasserman, Isaac Bronfman, Genrikh Koifman and Max Riant. The first literary work to be published in Birobidzhan was a collection of poems by the young poet Emmanuil Kazakevich, who later won fame as a prose writer. The Birobidzhan Drama Theatre gave the first performance of his play *Milk and Honey* about the life of settlers who became farmers. The theatre also stages plays by local playwrights Boris Miller and G. Rabnikov. The regional radio frequently includes in its programmes songs written by local composers to words by local poets.

In 1967 the Soviet government awarded the Jewish Autonomous Region the Order of Lenin for its achievements in economic and cultural development. In 1972 the region was honoured with the Order of Friendship of Peoples for outstanding services in strengthening the fraternal friendship of peoples, for achievements in economic and cultural progress and on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

The political structure of the Jewish Autonomous Region is continuing to develop and making further progress. Early in December 1981 the fourth session of the tenth convocation of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation passed laws giving a new legal status to five national autonomous regions, including the Jewish Autonomous Region.

In accordance with the Constitution of the Russian Federation the law had been previously discussed and approved by a session of the Soviet of People's Deputies of the Jewish Autonomous Region. The relevant ministries, departments and scientific establishments of the republic took part in drafting the law.

In accordance with the Communist Party's policy of enhancing the role of local government bodies, the Soviets, in all spheres of life, the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic passed a new law extending the rights and powers of the Soviet of People's Deputies of the Jewish Autonomous Region in the fields of state, economic, social and cultural development.

In April 1984 the Jewish Autonomous Region celebrated its 50th anniversary.

THE ANTI-ZIONIST COMMITTEE OF SOVIET PUBLIC OPINION

Appeal by Initiating Group—Reasons for Forming
Committee—Aims and Tasks—First Press Conference—
Beginning of Activities

In April 1983 Soviet newspapers published the appeal of an initiating group consisting of leading Soviet political and public figures, scientists, men of letters and cultural workers of Jewish nationality.

Here is the text of their statement:

APPEAL

The international situation has sharply deteriorated recently as a result of actions by imperialism's most aggressive forces, especially the reactionary circles of the US. Imperialism is pinning its hopes on being able to change in its favour the balance of military forces between the NATO and Warsaw Treaty countries, between the US and the USSR, and is stepping up the arms race. A psychological war has been unleashed on Washington's initiative, and attempts are being made to launch a crusade against the USSR and world socialism. The threat to peace on earth has increased, and this is a source of deep concern to all honest people.

In its global strategy imperialism makes wide use of international Zionism as one of its shock detachments in the offensive against socialism and the national liberation movement, against the forces of peace and social progress.

The Israeli ruling elite and the leaders of international Zionism are responsible for political adventurism and such crimes as the occupation of Arab territories, the armed aggression against sovereign Lebanon, the killing and injuring of tens of thousands of peaceful civilians, the massacre in

the Palestinian Sabra and Shatila refugee camps, violence and torture in Ansar and other concentration camps.

These crimes have everywhere aroused the indignation of all genuinely democratic forces and organizations of various political orientation, religious circles, prominent government figures and all people of good will.

The reckless, adventurist policy of the Israeli Zionists brings trouble and suffering not only to the Arab peoples. It runs counter to the aims of establishing a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, and thus to the vital interests of Israel itself.

In spite of all that, Begin and his supporters are continuing their policy of expansion and political terror with all-round aid and support from US imperialism and international Zionism.

In its essence Zionism is extreme nationalism, chauvinism and racial intolerance; it is justification of territorial seizures and annexation and armed adventurism; it is a cult of political arbitrariness and impunity; it is demagoguery and ideological sabotage, sordid manoeuvres and perfidy.

Zionism as a form of racism and the policy of the Israeli government vis-à-vis the Arab peoples have been repeatedly condemned in the decisions of the United Nations Organisation.

We know that the Western mass media, including the Zionist propaganda machine, daily slander the Soviet Union, its history and life today, and present its peaceful foreign policy in a distorted light. The nationalities policy of the CPSU is being falsified most crudely. The Zionist ringleaders claim the right to "defend" Soviet Jews in an effort to persuade world public opinion that there is a "Jewish question" in the USSR.

We vigorously protest against such fabrications. Socialist reality and the successes of our country in implementing the Leninist nationalities policy fully refute them.

Soviet Jews feel only contempt for the attempts of Zionist propaganda-mongers to interfere in their life, and angrily denounce the lies and slander invented about their socialist homeland. Jews who are citizens of the USSR are an inalienable part of the Soviet people.

As one multinational family we are building a new and splendid society—communism; we are fighting for peace and friendship among peoples and rebuffing any attempts to undermine the internationalist community of the Soviet people. We can only describe as absurd the attempts of the Zionist ideologists to depict any criticism of Zionism, any condemna-

tion by the Soviet public of the aggressive policy of the ruling circles of Israel as a "manifestation of antisemitism". It is common knowledge that Soviet people are true internationalists and resolutely reject any form of chauvinism, including Zionism and antisemitism.

Our reason and conscience compel us to address this Appeal to all Soviet citizens.

We call on workers, collective farmers and intellectuals to take an active part in the political exposure of Zionism and firmly rebuff its intrigues.

We call on workers, collective farmers and intellectuals to provide substantiated criticism of the reactionary essence of the ideology and the aggressive nature of the political practice of Zionism.

We call on men of letters, artists and journalists to reveal still more fully in their works and statements the anti-popular and anti-human nature of the subversive propaganda and policy of Zionism.

With the object of coordinating our efforts we propose that a voluntary organisation, the Anti-Zionist Committee of Soviet Public Opinion, be set up and call upon Soviet citizens of all nationalities to take an active part in its work.

This will make it possible to wage a more resolute struggle against the ideology and political practice of Zionism, the struggle for social progress and peace on earth.

Colonel-General David DRAGUNSKY, twice Hero of the Soviet Union; Academician Martin KABACHNIK, Hero of Socialist Labour, Winner of the Lenin and State prizes;

Genrikh GOFMAN, Member of the USSR Writers' Union, Hero of the Soviet Union; Professor Samuel ZIVS, Doctor of Law, Merited Worker in Science of the Russian Federation;

Boris SHEININ, Member of the USSR Film-Makers' Union;

Professor Grigori BONDAREVSKY, Doctor of History, Merited Worker in Science of the Russian Federation;

Professor Genrikh ZIMANAS, Doctor of Philosophy;

Yuri KOLESNIKOV, Member of the USSR Writers' Union

Pravda, April 1, 1983

As may be clearly seen from the Appeal the forming of the committee was no accident. A decisive stimulus to the efforts of the Soviet public in their struggle against the Zionists' crimes was the escalation of steps taken by imperialist circles to undermine peace and expressed in particular in the bloody act of aggression by Israeli extremists against Lebanon.

Nor could the Soviet people be indifferent to the fact that in accordance with a well-established tradition the Zionist-Israeli criminal acts were accompanied by a fresh outburst of anti-Sovietism and slander against the Soviet nationalities policy. The peak of the anti-Soviet campaign was marked by what was called an extraordinary "world conference" held in Jerusalem in March 1983, which was, of course, "in defence of Soviet Jews".

In such circumstances the Appeal of the Initiating Group for the formation of an Anti-Zionist Committee of Soviet Public Opinion met with a positive response among Soviet people. The initiating group and the editorial offices of newspapers received very many letters approving the initiative.

On April 21 the foundation meeting attended by members of the Moscow public and the press unanimously proclaimed the formation of the Anti-Zionist Committee of Soviet Public Opinion (AKSO). At the meeting of the council of founders, consisting of representatives of leading Soviet public organisations such as the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions (AUCCTU), the Soviet Women's Committee, the Committee of Youth Organisations of the USSR, the Soviet War Veterans Committee, Novosti Press Agency, the Soviet Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee and others, a 37-member committee composed of outstanding public figures, scien-

tists, workers, collective farmers, artists and professional people was elected.

Thirteen people were elected to the Presidium of the Committee. Twice Hero of the Soviet Union, Colonel-General David Dragunsky was elected chairman of the committee, Professor Samuel Zivs, Doctor of Law and Merited Worker in Science of the Russian Federation, was elected first vice-chairman, and Mark Krupkin, Candidate of Law, Igor Belyaev, Doctor of Economic Science, and Yuri Kolesnikov, a writer, were elected vice-chairmen.

Yakov Fishman, Chief Rabbi of the Moscow Choral Synagogue, since deceased, was also elected to the Presidium of the Committee.

In his inaugural speech committee chairman David Dragunsky stressed that the anti-Zionist Committee of Soviet Public Opinion had been formed to unite the efforts of Soviet citizens in giving an organised rebuff to Zionism and in exposing its reactionary essence. In its activities the committee would firmly take the standpoint of the Leninist nationalities policy and of strengthening friendship between the nations and nationalities of the multinational Soviet state on the basis of the principles of internationalism.

"The anti-Zionist Committee of Soviet Public Opinion," he said, "in accordance with its charter aims will render assistance and support to Soviet citizens taking part in the struggle against international Zionism. It will support activities and campaign in the country and abroad to expose the reactionary ideology and political practices of Zionism. It will maintain ties and contacts with progressive organisations abroad which are waging an active struggle against Zionism.

"In connection with the formation of AKSO," David Dragunsky concluded, "I foresee a fresh

howl of anger from the Zionist camp against the Soviet Union. Well, such howls will have no effect upon us. We shall try to do the utmost to unmask the real face of Zionism and its inhuman nature."

First vice-chairman Samuel Zivs noted that one of the important functions of the committee would be to draw Soviet citizens—scientists, men of letters, art workers, journalists—into the struggle against Zionism by producing scientific studies, literary works of high artistic value, films, plays, works of fine art and journalistic works, which will expose the reactionary ideology and practices of Zionism, as well as its anti-Soviet essence. To this end the committee would take an active part in submitting works in the field of science, literature and the arts for Lenin prizes, USSR state prizes, state prizes of union republics, and Young Communist League prizes.

Samuel Zivs went on to explain that the funds of the Anti-Zionist Committee of Soviet Public Opinion are formed from contributions by Soviet public organisations, voluntary donations by various scientific, artistic and cultural institutions, private donations and publishing revenues.

On June 6, 1983, the Anti-Zionist Committee of Soviet Public Opinion held its first press conference for Soviet and foreign journalists. Opening the conference committee chairman David Dragunsky noted the great interest and satisfaction displayed by wide sections of the Soviet public in connection with the formation of the committee and the beginning of its activities.

"Our Committee," he said, "has received a full public mandate for its activities. Quite a lot of letters welcoming the formation of the committee have also been received from organisations and individuals abroad."

Answering many questions from Soviet and foreign journalists, leading members of the committee spoke in detail about the tasks and the principles of its work, set out their views on present international problems and rejected the insinuations of Zionist propaganda with regard to the formation of the committee.

First vice-chairman Samuel Zivs stressed in particular that the committee, expressing the opinion of the Soviet public, upheld the right of Israel to exist and the right of the Arab people of Palestine to establish their own sovereign state.

Criticism of the nazi methods used by the Israeli government and military in occupied Arab territories in no way meant that the Soviet Union was for the liquidation of the state of Israel as a nazi state. The Soviet Union and its people were condemning only the methods by which the Israeli government and reactionary military leaders tried to solve "the Palestinian question".

Samuel Zivs and other leaders and members of the committee vigorously rebuffed the attempts of Zionist propaganda and some Western mass media to depict any Soviet criticism of Zionism and even the setting-up of the Anti-Zionist Committee as a manifestation of "Soviet antisemitism", as well as attempts to identify anti-Zionism with antisemitism and Jews with Zionists.

It was stressed at the press conference that Zionist practices was nothing new to the Soviet public. In many letters Soviet people expressed their approval of the formation of the committee and stressed the groundlessness of such Zionist methods.

"I have always regarded the Zionists, and I regard them now, as enemies of the Jews, and I have always been, and am today, against those who identify Zionists with Jews. This is done either by Zio-

nists themselves or by antisemites," wrote Eliosius Zeifas, a journalist from Latvia, for example.

Vladimir Derkach, manager of an inter-collective farm in the Ukraine, who had lived through the nazi wartime occupation, wrote: "I do not identify the Zionists with the Jews, just as I did not identify the nazis with the Germans."

"No one will be deceived today by allegations to the effect that our opposition to Israeli genocide and to Israel's policy in the Middle East is a manifestation of antisemitism.

"We are internationalists who reject all forms of chauvinism. That is precisely why we come out against Zionism, against the oppression of one people by another," wrote Perch Zaituntsyan, secretary of the Union of Writers of Armenia, describing his attitude to Zionist hypocrisy in a letter to the Anti-Zionist Committee.

Not only Soviet people think thay way.

I. Brodi, a Jew from Norway, wrote: "We Jews feel ashamed (about the actions of the Israeli military in Lebanon—*Ed.*). We must unite our efforts against Zionism. I appeal to all Jews to deny any support to Zionist Israel. The Zionists claim that they are speaking on behalf of all Jews. But I do not want passively to accept the mass killings. So let them not speak in my name."

Academician Martin Kabachnik, a member of the committee presidium, refuted the fabrications of the Zionist and Western propaganda machine about discrimination against Soviet Jews in the field of education and science. He stressed that as regards the number of people with higher education in relation to the population the Soviet Jews hold a leading place among the nationalities in the USSR and first place in the world.

Refuting the anti-Soviet claims about the "suppression" of Yiddish and Jewish national culture in the USSR, Professor Genrikh Zimanas, Doctor of Philosophy, said: "It can be affirmed with all responsibility that the Zionist self-styled 'champions' of Jewish Soviet culture are absolutely indifferent to Yiddish—the national language of Soviet Jews. Do you know of any Western publishing house which would be prepared to reprint the books of Soviet authors writing in Yiddish or at least to bring out an anthology of works in Yiddish published in the Moscow journal *Sovietish Heimland*? Do you know of a single Western firm that would be prepared to put out records of Jewish songs sung in Yiddish by Iosif Kobzon or Galina Kareva? Would any Western newspaper—from *Le Monde* to *The New York Times*—print a report about this fine Yiddish Primer, approved by the public education department of the Jewish autonomous region and published in Khabarovsk in 1982? Why is all this hushed up? Because if it were made public the true purpose of the 'defence of Jewish culture in the Soviet Union' would become clear to everyone in the West."

Speaking of the escalation of anti-Soviet propaganda in connection with the establishment of the committee, committee vice-chairman Yuri Kolesnikov said: "The most extraordinary thing is that voices 'in defence of Soviet Jews' are heard mainly from those countries where nazi criminals stained with Jewish blood have taken shelter and are living imperturbed."

In their speeches at the press conference the committee leaders affirmed their resolve to fight any manifestation of nationalism, chauvinism, anti-semitism and Zionism. They expressed their solidarity with the struggle of the Arab people, first and

foremost with the Palestinians, against Israeli expansionism.

In the course of 1983 the committee published several statements in defence of peace in the Middle East, denouncing the continuing crimes against peaceful Palestinians, expressing their solidarity with progressive public opinion in Israel which opposes the militarist policy of the Israeli "hawks".

Almost every day the committee is visited by Soviet citizens and by members of organisations and individuals from other countries too. During talks with visitors committee spokesmen explain the aims and tasks of the committee, exchange information, make contacts of mutual benefit.

Information and publication activities aimed at distributing the important documents and materials on the committee's work are developing successfully.

The Anti-Zionist Committee of Soviet Public Opinion is active in the Ukraine, Byelorussia and Moldavia. City anti-Zionist committees are being formed in Moscow and Leningrad.

WHO ARE THEY, "PRISONERS OF ZION"?

Who Needs Them and Why—Mikhail Leviyev, Embezzler of Public Funds, Speculator and Smuggler—Mikhail Shtern, Extortioner and Bribe Taker in Doctor's Dress—Anatoli Shcharansky, Spy and Libeller—Igor Guberman, Leader of a Gang of Thieves—Viktor Brailovsky, Libeller and Falsifier—Boris Kanevsky and Valeri Senderov, Speculators on Human Weaknesses

The term "prisoner of Zion" is an invention of the Zionist propaganda machine. All Soviet Jews in custody or behind bars after being sentenced by Soviet courts to terms of imprisonment are called "prisoners of Zion". Zionist propaganda claims that these persons voice the "aspirations of all Soviet Jews" and are being punished solely for their Zionist beliefs or their wish to emigrate to Israel.

Here the Zionists are exploiting the fact that offenders and criminals are still to be found among Soviet Jews, as among citizens of other nationality in the USSR. When these criminals are exposed and brought to trial, the Zionist propaganda machine springs to their defence and the Soviet state is accused of "persecuting" and "discriminating against" Jews. The aim of such lies is to foster the myth about "eternal Russian" and, above all, "Soviet" antisemitism and to promote the "exodus" of Soviet Jews to the "Promised Land".

Who are they, these "prisoners of Zion" the West talks and writes so much about?

* * *

Mikhail Leviyev was the manager of the *Tajikistan* special shop in Moscow. Many of the goods

delivered to the shop never reached the counter, but were sold illegally at extortionate prices, well above the ones fixed. That was how 220,000 metres of fabric were sold on the side for 1,500,000 roubles. Leviyev pocketed in bribes 77,500 roubles. In addition, Leviyev engaged in buying gold and re-selling it, naturally, at higher prices, as well as in smuggling and illegal trafficking in foreign currency.

When Leviyev was arrested, 40 kilos of gold in coins and bars and two million roubles in money and other valuables were confiscated from him and his accomplices.

In December 1974 the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation sentenced him to be shot for illegal foreign currency trafficking, abuse of his official position, smuggling, large-scale embezzlement and bribery, as well as promoting profiteering in aggravating circumstances. The Supreme Court of the USSR endorsed the sentence. The accused then appealed to the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet for commutation of his sentence. His request was granted and the criminal is now serving a prison term.

Leonid Tsypin, a former "champion of Jewish rights", who had come back to the Soviet Union, wrote a letter to a Moscow newspaper in May 1977 describing the methods Western anti-Soviet propaganda resorted to in its bid to present Mikhail Leviyev as a "victim of antisemitism".

"Sometimes these attempts turned out to be simply absurd," Tsypin said. "To describe Mikhail Leviyev as a 'victim of persecution' after he had been proved guilty of large-scale foreign currency trafficking seemed a bit too much even to us. But orders came from London, from M. Shernborn, member of a committee for the protection of the

rights of Soviet Jews. So we went about things in the usual way, that is to say, we drew up a letter in defence of this 'innocent man'. Naturally, the letter had to be signed and many signatures were needed. We did not even take the trouble to collect them, we simply signed the names of people who were not aware of this. Our letter and the report of yet another 'arbitrary act' were sent to Western radio stations which rushed to the defence of an 'innocent victim'. These radio stations again accused the Soviet Union of 'trampling human rights underfoot'."

* * *

The case of *Mikhail Shtern*, a 69-year-old doctor in the city of Vinnitsa, the Soviet Ukraine, merits detailed discussion.

His name first appeared on the pages of some Western papers late in 1974. Mikhail Shtern, then head of the polyclinic of an endocrinological dispensary, was sentenced to eight years' imprisonment for extorting bribes from patients and for swindling (Article 168, Part II, and Article 143, Part II of the Criminal Code of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic).

But taking into account the age and state of health of the defendant, and complying with the insistent requests of Shtern and his wife, the Soviet authorities released him in the spring of 1977 before his term of imprisonment expired. He was permitted to leave the Soviet Union with his wife. As soon as Shtern appeared in the West, he decided to "express his gratitude" to the Soviet authorities for their humane approach. In numerous statements to the press, in letters to the US President and other Western politicians Mikhail Shtern in-

troduced himself as a "victim of Soviet arbitrary action", as a "martyr who suffered for his convictions", and who was punished allegedly for refusing to condemn his sons Viktor and August, who chose to emigrate to Israel, as well as for intending to follow them himself.

But let us look at the facts. Criminal proceedings were instituted against Mikhail Shtern (and he was taken into custody) on May 30, 1974. His sons applied for exit visas to Israel four months later, in October 1974.

Moreover, when in the course of preliminary investigation Shtern learnt that his sons intended to emigrate to Israel, he condemned them in a statement dated November 3, 1974.

"So far as I personally am concerned I have never wished to leave my homeland—the Soviet Union," he wrote, himself underlining the sentence.

At the examination and public trial it was incontrovertibly proved that Mikhail Shtern, physician, accepted "rewards" for *"actions not connected with his own direct rendering of medical aid to patients"*.

All forms of medical aid are free of charge in the Soviet Union. But it is not against the law to make gifts to physicians in charge of treatment. It was not such gifts, however, that led to the investigation and trial of Shtern's case. Mikhail Shtern was found guilty of extorting "rewards" in advance, even before starting treatment.

Another line in Shtern's criminal activities was systematic profiteering in medicines. In the course of the trial it was established that Shtern forced his patients to buy cheap medicines (costing only a few kopecks) at prices way beyond those fixed by the state.

The evidence produced by 100 witnesses and the findings of forensic medical experts led to Mikhail Shtern being found guilty of extorting bribes, of profiteering in medicines and of fraud. What about Shtern himself? How did he view his own actions?

In a statement he made on October 1, 1974 to the head of the criminal investigation division in the Procurator's Office of the Vinnitsa Region, he wrote:

"Please consider the question of altering the article of the charge and, instead of Articles 168 and 143, *bringing charges against me for abuse of office and profiteering in hormone medicines which are in short supply*" (his own italics).

Is not this statement by Shtern an admission that *he is guilty of the charges brought against him?*

Finally, another fact of no little importance. While the doctor was under investigation, he advanced a significant argument. In a written statement addressed to the Procurator of the Vinnitsa Region on October 21, 1974 he said:

"My conviction in court will give *me the halo of a martyr and this will only play into the hands of hostile propaganda and of the enemies of socialism*" (his own italics).

How should we view this statement? As true insight? Today when, to use his own phrase, he is playing "into the hands of hostile propaganda and of the enemies of socialism", his striking "foresight" is easy to explain. While in the dock, he was already making far-reaching plans to gain publicity on the grounds of nonexistent "Soviet antisemitism".

What they had failed to achieve in Vinnitsa, Mikhail Shtern and company and his Zionist patrons would try to achieve with the help of Western public opinion.

But "the case of Dr. Shtern" only shows that people performing anti-Soviet services are in extremely short supply on the Western market, if the propaganda machine has to resort to the services of a hardened liar who has trampled underfoot the elementary ethical standards of his humane profession and who has profited from the sufferings of his patients.

• • •

In the summer of 1978 a trial was held at a district court in Moscow which gave rise to many false rumours outside the USSR. For five days—from July 10 to 14—a judicial board for criminal cases of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation examined the case of *Anatoli Shcharansky*, aged 30, a resident of the town of Istra near Moscow. He was charged with espionage on behalf of foreign states and of systematically preparing for foreign clients material deliberately distorting life in the Soviet Union.

His name is widely known in the West because the Western mass media conducted a broad propaganda campaign on his behalf. They pictured Anatoli Shcharansky as a "champion of civil rights", an "active worker for the emigration of Soviet Jews to Israel" and even as an "observer" checking on fulfilment of the Helsinki agreement. The Western media alleged that he was brought to trial because of this.

But the facts present quite a different picture of Shcharansky.

It was proved in court that Anatoli Shcharansky and his accomplices sought to undermine the defence capacity of the USSR. To this end in 1976 and 1977 they collected information about people who

had been refused exit visas because they knew state secrets. The lists Shcharansky drew up not only gave the names of these people, but also information on the location of the defence industries in which they worked, on the security conditions and maintenance of secrecy there, as well as on the executive staff of these enterprises. Up to the time of his arrest in March 1977 Shcharansky regularly sent this information to addresses abroad, taking all possible precautions to maintain secrecy.

At one of the court hearings the accused said:

"I personally took part in collecting this sort of information about people who had been refused exit visas and sent such material to the West."

The evidence Shcharansky presented in court showed that on more than one occasion in 1976 and 1977 he assisted a correspondent of a Western paper who, as the competent organs established, was an agent of a Western intelligence service. Shcharansky's assistance took the form of establishing secret contacts with Soviet scientists and specialists who knew state secrets and of creating conditions in which they could be closely questioned.

At such interviews the "correspondent" displayed an interest in specific matters, such as information about the Soviet space programme, which was not for publication in the press, secret information on sociological surveys, parapsychology and so on. On the "correspondent's" instructions Shcharansky personally questioned a geneticist who divulged information about institutions engaged in genetic engineering research.

From the autumn of 1976 Shcharansky helped this agent meet another scientist on several occasions to obtain information about the results of his secret research. At his last meeting with the scien-

tist this extremely curious "correspondent" was caught red-handed as the materials were being handed over to him.

The findings of the investigation showed that Anatoli Shcharansky was equally active in another field. He fabricated and sent to addresses abroad surveys and appeals deliberately distorting the national policy of the Soviet state. Many contained direct appeals to Western politicians and governments to put "constant strong pressure" on the USSR to make it change its home and foreign policy on certain questions.

Here are some of these statements.

In July 1974 Shcharansky and his associates drew up an "Appeal to the American people and the US Congress" and sent it to an address abroad. Distorting the Soviet "emigration policy" the appeal urged the US to take a tougher stand on trade and economic relations with the USSR.

In December 1974 the US Congress adopted an amendment to the Trade Act which made the granting of most-favoured-nation treatment to socialist countries dependent on their readiness to allow the US to interfere in their internal affairs. In this connection Shcharansky drafted and sent a new "appeal" abroad. The "appeal" described the US policy of discrimination as an "important achievement" and "invaluable support to persons seeking to emigrate from the USSR".

From 1974 to 1977 Shcharansky alone or together with others wrote and sent at least 17 such documents abroad.

To lend "weight" to such material he did not hesitate to falsify facts. Many witnesses confirmed that the "Lists of Persons Refused Exit Visas to Israel" which Shcharansky regularly compiled included the names of people who had long left the

USSR or had never wished to do so. Many people who had allegedly signed the appeals he drafted knew nothing about it. A forensic examination revealed that thirty signatures to one of the appeals had been penned in Shcharansky's own hand.

In the summer of 1975 Shcharansky, together with two accomplices, handed a false "survey" of "discrimination" against Jews in the USSR to US Senators who were in Moscow at that time.

"Defendant Shcharansky," the public prosecutor said to him at the trial, "you wrote many times in your material that Jews in the USSR were discriminated against. Has your family ever been discriminated against?" Shcharansky had nothing to say in answer to the question and remained silent. Then the prosecutor read out an official document showing that Anatoli Shcharansky, his father, mother and brother had received a higher education in the USSR. All of them had worked in their profession. Upon graduating from an institute Shcharansky himself had worked as an engineer, then as a senior engineer in a defence and scientific-research institution. He had not been overlooked for promotion. He was trusted: he had access to important Soviet state secrets. Neither Shcharansky nor his family were subjected to any discrimination.

"In the material you sent to the West you frequently wrote that Soviet Jews were immediately fired as soon as they applied to emigrate to Israel. Did that happen to you personally after you submitted such an application?" he was asked in another question by the prosecutor. Shcharansky replied that nobody had fired him. He left his job himself because it took him away from his "public activities".

These are only a few facts from the several dozen volumes of material concerning the case of the "champion of human rights" Anatoli Shcharansky. Several states raised their indignant voices in his defence. But what punishment would these states impose according to their own laws for such offences as Shcharansky committed?

Virtually every country, regardless of the social system it belongs to, considers espionage on behalf of a foreign state to be a particularly grave crime meriting very severe punishment.

The deliberate concoction and circulation of distorted information damaging state interests are also serious crimes.

Soviet laws are no exception to the rule. Acting on the basis of procedural legislation the court examined all the circumstances of the criminal case of Anatoli Shcharansky charged with espionage activities and anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda and, finding him guilty of these crimes, sentenced him to 13 years of imprisonment.

Despite the fact that Shcharansky's guilt was indisputably proved, some circles in the West are still holding "conferences", "hearings" and even "tribunals" in his defence. All this shows that anti-Soviet circles and other enemies of peace, détente and co-operation are trying to play upon the ignorance of some, the credulity of others and the thirst for sensationalism of yet others to further their own selfish political aims.

It is a pity that eminent political and public leaders and parliamentarians are sometimes drawn into these vociferous anti-Soviet campaigns. As a result, they frequently find themselves in an embarrassing situation or just looking ridiculous.

This was the case with Lord Andover, a member of the House of Lords. In a public statement in

December 1979, he alleged that Anatoli Shcharansky was mortally sick in prison, dying of hunger, emaciated and weighing only 41 kilograms. It so happened that exactly three weeks before Lord Andover's statement, on November 19, 1979, physicians had made a regular examination of Shcharansky's physical condition and found it normal.

Shortly afterwards Shcharansky's mother, who was granted permission to see him, confirmed that his physical state was normal. These were the true facts about Anatoli Shcharansky who was alleged to be mortally sick and dying of hunger.

Of course, you can reduce Shcharansky's weight by eleven kilograms. But you cannot reduce the responsibility a politician or public leader bears for his utterances, if he takes on trust and disseminates false "information" of that kind.

* * *

In August, 1979, the Dmitrov city department of internal affairs of the Moscow region arrested *Igor Guberman*, a Moscow resident, born in 1936, an electrical engineer by training, who described himself as a man of letters by profession.

After his arrest "committees in defence of Igor Guberman" were formed in the United States, Israel, Britain and France. Western mass media portrayed him as an "outstanding man of letters", prosecuted in the USSR for publishing his work in an illegal anti-Soviet publication called *Jews in the USSR* and for publishing in Israel a book of his verses entitled *Jewish datszybao* (under the pen name I. Garik), as well as for wanting to emigrate to Israel.

When in March 1980 Guberman and six of his accomplices were sentenced on the basis of several

articles of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (Articles 15-144, part 2, 17-144, part 2, and 208, part 4) to five years' imprisonment, none of the Western information media which had expressed indignation at "Soviet arbitrariness" informed readers in their countries of the real reasons for Igor Guberman's arrest and conviction. How could they do so when their "outstanding man of letters" and "Israeli patriot" was sentenced on the basis of articles of the criminal code dealing with "preparation and participation in systematic robberies following preliminary conspiracy by a group of people" and with "large-scale sale of property knowingly acquired by criminal means". In the course of investigation and in court it was proved that Igor Guberman had formed a gang of thieves which had long been involved in stealing old icons from villages and settlements in the Dmitrov district near Moscow. The stolen icons were sold at high prices for unlawful gain.

This is the true face of a "prisoner of Zion".

At the present time, in accordance with the amnesty of June 27, 1980, Guberman's sentence was amended to a suspended one with early release from confinement on condition the remaining term is served working at construction sites in the Krasnoyarsk area.

* * *

In June 1981 *Viktor Brailovsky*, aged 45, an engineering programmer, was tried in Moscow. The courtroom was crowded.

The defendant was charged with systematically and deliberately preparing and disseminating false materials defaming the Soviet state and social system. Brailovsky was sentenced to five years' banish-

ment—restricted residence in a designated area, the seven months of preliminary custody being taken into account at the rate of one day of custody for three days in exile. The majority of the people attending the trial met the sentence with approval.

The case was tried by the criminal case board of the Moscow City Court with Judge Vladimir Bogdanov presiding and two People's Assessors—Lyudmila Alyunina, lecturer at the Veterinary Academy, and Nikolai Moslyagin, fitter at a chemical engineering works.

Procurator Tamara Prazdnikova was state prosecutor in court.

Brailovsky's wife Irina and son Leonid were present at the trial.

As soon as the hearing began the defendant said he did not want a counsel for the defence because, as he put it, he had "worked out his own line of defence" and wanted to speak in his own defence. The court granted his request. The presiding judge explained to the accused the additional rights he enjoyed in this connection, in particular, his right to take part in cross-examination and the pleadings of the parties.

Viktor Brailovsky was arrested on November 13, 1980. The indictment read out in court stated that from 1973 to 1980 Brailovsky had systematically prepared and disseminated in written, printed and other form material containing fabrications defaming the Soviet state and social system. He was one of the leading producers of the illegal typewritten publication *Jews in the USSR* and editor and author of articles that appeared in it. Issues of this publication were illegally disseminated in the USSR and also illegally sent abroad, where they were used by anti-Soviet publishing houses and radio stations for conducting propaganda hostile to the Soviet

Union and giving world public opinion a distorted notion of the country.

It is worth noting that anti-Soviet allegations about the conditions of Jews in the USSR were accompanied by such Russophobic phrases as "Russia is the Augean Stables", "Russia—Land of Alcoholics", "Russia—Cultural Decline" and "Russians Hate Everything Beautiful, Talented and Original". Such utterances are a flagrant violation of the Constitution of the USSR which prohibits the defamation of any nationality in any form, as well as manifestations of intolerance, contempt or scorn.

Apart from that, the indictment pointed out that in 1976 Viktor Brailovsky wrote and circulated letters "To newly-elected US President Carter" and "To the US Congress" which contained fabrications slandering the Soviet state and social system. The letter to President Carter, for instance, referred to a "sinister plan to strangle emigration" from the USSR.

In the course of the two-day court hearings the circle of Brailovsky's acquaintances confirmed that he had played a leading part in publishing the illegal journal *Jews in the USSR* and other materials of a slanderous nature.

The testimony of witnesses and material evidence, such as issues of the journal, the letters addressed to the US Congress and the US President, convincingly proved the well-founded nature of the charges, the leading role Brailovsky played in preparing the materials, his authorship of and his participation in disseminating materials slandering the Soviet state and social system and distorting Soviet reality. The testimony of witnesses and official documents also helped establish that *Jews in the USSR* and other slanderous materials were disseminated in the Soviet Union and abroad.

Addressing the court, the state prosecutor, Procurator Tamara Prazdnikova, laid bare the deliberately slanderous character of these materials. The prosecutor cited official statistics and other specific facts completely refuting the fabrications about the "plight" of the Jews in the USSR and other anti-Soviet allegations contained in the materials compiled, written or edited by Brailovsky.

Here is an instance the court examined, an instance of the malicious twisting of facts and statistics by Viktor Brailovsky. In an article he wrote for *Jews in the USSR* Brailovsky claimed that the Soviet authorities were conducting a "tough policy" of discrimination against Jews in education. In support of his statement he cited figures over a period of several years as indicating a fall in the percentage of Jewish students at Soviet higher educational establishments.

The percentage did indeed decline. But it was shown in court that this decline was not due to discrimination against Jews but to the opening of a large number of new higher educational establishments and to an increase in the number of students by tens and even hundreds of thousands, especially in formerly backward areas of Central Asia, Transcaucasia and Siberia. This, naturally, led to a fall in the percentage of Jewish students, as well as that of students of other small nationalities. But programmer Viktor Brailovsky was well aware that the only sound criterion for determining any nationality's opportunities in education is the proportion of students at higher educational establishments to the overall size of that particular nation or nationality. This proportion convincingly shows that in the USSR Jews take a leading place among students at higher educational establishments. They are ahead of most other nationalities. Moreover, there

is a clear tendency for the number of Jewish students in proportion to the size of the Jewish population to increase. Let us recall that in the 1978/79 academic year, for instance, there were 329 Jewish students per 10,000 Jewish citizens, as compared to 311 in the 1976/77 academic year. It should also be mentioned that for the USSR as a whole there is an average of 196 students per 10,000 population.

In her final address to the court the state prosecutor pointed out that in the preliminary investigation and court hearings all the procedural norms had been scrupulously observed. All the requests of the defendant had been granted and he had fully exercised his rights both as the accused and as counsel for the defence.

* * *

After Brailovsky two persons, *Boris Kanevsky* and *Valeri Senderov*, were sentenced for similar slanders, though unlike Brailovsky they manipulated not figures but human weaknesses.

It is known that overestimating one's own abilities is a human failing, especially when a person is young and it is a question of his mental abilities (as an ancient sage once said: "Everyone complains of a lack of money but nobody complains of a lack of brains."). If such overestimation is "moderate" then it is of no harm either to an individual himself or to those around him. Moreover, moderate or, we may say, reasonable overestimation may play a good role, encouraging a person to develop his intellect to the level he ascribes himself.

But there are cases where a person overestimates his own abilities beyond all reasonable limits. Such people, as a rule, consider themselves undeservedly

neglected. They blame everybody and everything for their failure in life, allegedly due to others' underestimation of their abilities. They complain to everybody of "injustice".

Precisely such failures among Jewish applicants who did not pass common entrance exams to institutions of higher education were sought out by the so-called "Jewish activists" Boris Kanevsky, Valeri Senderov and their like. Expressing "their warm sympathy" to the worried youths and making great play with the "injustice" which had befallen them, Kanevsky and Senderov drew from these youths complaints about the "bias" of examiners because of their "Jewish origin".

To give their activities greater weight Kanevsky and Senderov even founded "an organisation", and acting on behalf of this "organisation" soon published a "research study". Naturally this "research study" was immediately forwarded to the West where the mass media lost no opportunity of using it to anti-Soviet ends.

All these despicable activities were conducted for precisely this "final result". Indeed, if Kanevsky and Senderov had wanted to depict the true situation as regards the entry of Soviet youth of Jewish origin to institutes, to show the accessibility of higher education in the USSR to Jews, it would have been sufficient to refer to the freely available statistical data.

In Moscow, for example, where there are well-known institutions of higher education (the "research study" of Kanevsky and Senderov made a special point of the "inaccessibility" of Moscow institutes to Jews) the ratio of Jewish students to the number of the Jewish population in the Soviet capital is 340 to 10,000. The allegations in this "research study" that Jewish applicants are delib-

erately asked the most difficult questions are plain lies.

The competitive system of entrance examinations to Soviet higher education establishments assesses applicants' knowledge by answers to three or four questions on a card which the applicant himself picks from a pile of cards. The questions on exam cards fully correspond to the detailed programmes worked out for each subject. As a rule these programmes are available to future applicants a year before the exams. These are indisputable facts. It is no wonder and absolutely right that Kanevsky and Senderov were brought to trial for slanderous statements made for anti-Soviet ends.

As for those, by the way, not so many unlucky Jewish applicants who see the reason for their failure in anything except their poor knowledge, there is a popular joke among Moscow Jews about a stutterer who would complain to everybody that he had been refused a job as radio announcer because he was a Jew.

* * *

So we see that the "prisoners of Zion", the moment they lose their propaganda halo and appear in their true colours, are swindlers, embezzlers, extortionists, bribe-takers, profiteers, intriguers, common and state criminals. These people have nothing in common with the overwhelming majority of Soviet Jews who are honest workers and patriots.

THE TRUTH ABOUT EMIGRATION TO ISRAEL

Observance of the Helsinki Agreement—Reasons for Refusals—Causes of Decline in Emigration—False Summons

In the Soviet Union there is no social motivation for emigration: no unemployment or poverty exists, and the USSR Constitution guarantees all citizens their vital social and political rights. The living standards of Soviet people are steadily improving. The Leninist national policy ensures the progress of all nations and nationalities. So it is not surprising that the overwhelming majority of applications for emigration from the USSR are prompted by the wish of families to be reunited. It is also natural that most of such applications are filed by Jews whose families were disunited during the Second World War and the period of nazi occupation.

Official figures show that in the postwar period—from 1945 to 1981—approximately 250,000 citizens of Jewish nationality, including children, emigrated from the USSR to Palestine and, when Israel was founded, to Israel.

In full compliance with the Helsinki agreement the Soviet state has in recent years taken steps to simplify procedures for leaving and entering the country.

In particular, in order to simplify the procedure for foreign travel the Statute on Entry into and

Exit from the USSR, approved by a decision of the USSR Council of Ministers, and other legislative acts have been brought into conformity with the recommendations of the Helsinki Final Act:

- the state duty to be paid by applicant for exit papers was reduced by half (in two stages—in 1975 and 1978); local financial bodies have been granted the right to exempt some citizens from payment of this duty in the light of their financial circumstances;

- payment of state duty for examination of renewed applications for exit papers has been abolished;

- the time for review of cases of refusal of an exit visa has been halved; today such refusals may be reviewed at the applicant's request every six months;

- the procedure for exit from the USSR has been simplified; in particular, the number of documents citizens must submit has been reduced; people applying for emigration permits do not have to produce a reference from their place of work; they now have to present a document stating that their place of work has no material or other claims against the applicant;

- customs formalities have been simplified with respect to household appliances, furniture and personal effects, including durables, such as automobiles, furniture, refrigerators, regardless of when they were purchased.

Some people are refused exit visas upon their first application. But such refusals are of a temporary nature. A decision on exit visas may be delayed until the relatives—those wishing to emigrate and those remaining in the country—come to an agreement between themselves and, in particular, settle any outstanding accounts. Decisions on

exit visas may also be delayed for a specified time in respect of persons who, by the nature of their work, have had access to state secrets or who have had important special military training. Persons under preliminary investigation or serving terms of punishment to which they have been sentenced by courts of law are, naturally, also refused exit visas. Such practices are in full conformity with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights endorsed by the UN General Assembly on December 16, 1966. In particular, this document provides for restrictions on the right of citizens to leave their country in cases connected with the safeguarding of state security, public order and health.

After the necessary period has passed for the secret nature of information to lapse, after all matters have been settled between relatives and after a person has served any term of punishment he has been sentenced to, or been pardoned or released before the expiration of such a term, the applications of citizens who were previously refused exit visas are reconsidered and, as a rule, granted.

As a rule, if a citizen has applied for an exit visa, this does not affect his position at work or his social status. Applicants working at defence enterprises or institutions conducting research of a secret nature form a negligible minority of the total number—they are an exception to the rule. In such cases these persons may be released from their jobs with the consent of their trade union and in conformity with the Labour Law Code. They are given other jobs. Normally, however, such people change their jobs in advance, before filing an application for emigration. Since in the Soviet Union there is a shortage of labour, finding a job is no problem at all.

Emigration affects the lives of many people. So it naturally gives rise to many problems. Two are of special importance.

First, the USSR favours the reunion of families. But quite often the desire of certain people to leave the country to be "reunited with their relatives" leads in fact to the destruction of existing families and family bonds. Children leave their parents behind and vice versa. Husbands divorce their wives and vice versa. Naturally the Soviet authorities protect, above all, the interests of Soviet citizens remaining behind. It is indeed not always easy to find the best way of solving such delicate problems as family relations.

Second, many Soviet citizens who have never even dreamed of emigrating are still receiving "summons" from non-existent relatives and strangers in Israel. The obvious purpose here is to provoke emigration or, at least, to sow mistrust towards people who command respect and prestige. A large number of those who have received such false summons have duly notified the Soviet authorities of it and expressed their rightful indignation.

Judging by the numerous stamps and signatures on such documents, Israeli government and administrative bodies, such as the consular department of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and others, are engaged in sending "summons" of this kind. But "documents" are being issued in the name of persons in Israel who are not relatives at all. Very often they are people whom the recipients of the "summons" have never heard of.

In this way the humane idea of family reunion, which is supported by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, is being exploited for political purposes.

Recent years have seen a marked decline in the number of people emigrating to Israel. On this basis the Israeli authorities and international Zionist circles are trying to incite public opinion against the Soviet Union and are accusing it of imposing "artificial restrictions" on emigration.

Referring to some anonymous experts, some speakers at the Jerusalem "conference in defence of Soviet Jewry," held in 1983, alleged, for example, that as many as 600 thousand Soviet Jews "were ready" to leave the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, the competent bodies of the Ministry for Internal Affairs are considering applications for exit visas of a mere few thousand people of Jewish nationality.

Several years ago a high-ranking Zionist official, Joseph Almogi, spoke about 100 thousand Soviet Jews who "desperately" wanted to go to Israel. Commenting on this figure, the deputy Minister for Internal Affairs of the USSR said in an interview with the present author that Mr. Almogi's estimates were most likely based on the number of false invitations sent by non-existent "relatives" to addresses in the USSR copied from, among other sources, the telephone directories of different Soviet cities. Possibly these anonymous experts also make their estimates of the number of Soviet Jews "ready to go to Israel" using this proven method, since the number of false invitations continues to grow.

It should be mentioned that the decline in emigration to Israel is not a purely Soviet phenomenon at all. During the 1970s, for instance, according to the US press, the number of emigrants to Israel from the US, which has a Jewish population of six million (three times bigger than that of the USSR), fell by two and a half times. The number of Jewish emigrants to Israel from countries of the West and the Middle East is also falling. Moreover, the Is-

raeli authorities have acknowledged that in recent years more people have been leaving Israel than immigrating to the country. Significantly, more than 600 thousand people, out of a total of 1.5 million immigrants who arrived in Israel from different countries, have left that country. The Israeli immigration authorities have bitterly remarked that more than half the Jews emigrating from the USSR to Israel never reach their destination because as soon as they cross the Soviet frontier they change their minds and go to other countries.

It should be pointed out that the real reasons for the dwindling stream of emigrants to Israel are the aggressive policy of its leaders which has deprived its citizens of a feeling of security and created a permanent threat of war, the country's grave economic situation, the high cost of living, an unprecedentedly high rate of inflation and extremely high taxation. The people of Israel live in an atmosphere of constant fear, instability and lack of confidence in the future.

TESTIMONY OF THE DECEIVED

Late "Dawning" of Peter Osnos—Social Incompatibility—Appeals Full of Bitterness and Despair

In the mid-seventies the Moscow correspondent of *The Washington Post* was Peter Osnos, renowned as a "friend and protector" of Soviet Jews. It was he who in every possible way incited Anatoli Shcharansky and other "Jewish activists" to prepare material on the "persecution of Jews in the USSR" and helped forward this material to the West. He himself regularly sent his newspaper articles on the "plight" of Soviet Jews. Forced to leave the Soviet Union with his reputation damaged, Osnos found himself in Israel.

In May 1978 *The Washington Post* published an article by Osnos on his usual theme—the "plight" of Soviet Jews, but those now in Israel, a country which while in Moscow he had spared no efforts in urging people to go to.

How did Osnos find the former Soviet Jews in the "promised land"?

For the sake of fairness he notes that for the majority of those who emigrated with economic motives conditions in Israel may seem difficult. Referring to records of the Israeli immigration authorities he says that three years after arriving more than a half of the Soviet immigrants are less satisfied with their jobs in Israel than they were

in the Soviet Union and less than half are satisfied with their salaries. More than 40 per cent of the Soviet Jews said after one year in Israel that their living standards were lower in Israel than in the Soviet Union.

People with skills, the official report continues, face a serious problem in finding a suitable job. Some immigrants, to their extreme disappointment, are becoming convinced that after the year during which they are paid by the government for working in scientific institutions they would be dismissed because there would be no vacancies for them. According to an analysis published by the law faculty of Tel Aviv University these factors, Osnos says, are the main reason why more and more emigrants with a higher education from the Soviet Union do not come to Israel. More than half the Soviet Jews who get visas for Israel go to other countries. By all accounts this figure is continuing to grow.

Peter Osnos stresses other reasons why Soviet emigrants do not want to come to Israel. In particular, it is their fear of a new war in the Middle East and of reported intolerance to mixed marriages. It is difficult especially for immigrants from Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, mountainous parts of Daghستان and from other regions of the Caucasus to adapt themselves to life in Israel. The report by Hanna Avidor and Rtu Zin of the immigration and assimilation department of the Jewish Agency, based on a survey of the lives of 5,000 immigrants from the Caucasus, says that immigrants from the Caucasus are facing many difficulties in all aspects of life. But no matter what problems they face it is more difficult for Soviet Jews to leave Israel than to come to it, Peter Osnos concludes, as another country has to be willing to accept them. Moreover,

they must pay back all the aid they received from the Israelis, which is a considerable sum. Some of them give themselves up to despair.

Has anything changed since then? Nothing. This was clear from the January 17, 1983 issue of the magazine *Newsweek*, which, by the way, added what had been "overlooked" by Peter Osnos.

This is how a magazine renowned for its anti-Sovietism depicts the position of Soviet Jews in Israel.

"Hampered by linguistic and cultural differences, they seem trapped in a psychological no-man's-land... In Israel they are ashamed to be Russians," said Juri Miloslavski, an emigrant from the USSR.

But finding a satisfying job is a real problem. That is why the newcomers strive to obtain a special status "kviut", which protects them from being fired. But it can be obtained after one or two years of employment and the prospect of obtaining one does not look good at all.

Failing to find here "a place under the sun" many former Soviet citizens would like to go back. They think their coming to Israel was the great mistake in their life.

Their late repentances are not unique. A lot of people deeply regret they yielded to the calls to leave for Israel. "I would crawl back on my knees," said one.

The majority of those who wish to go back are emigrants from the Central Asian and Caucasian republics. These people, who are scornfully called "second-rate people", strongly resent being discriminated against by the local authorities. The Israeli bureaucrats behave arrogantly towards emigrants from the Central Asian Republics. "If you come by mistake into the wrong office they just kick you

out while they have coffee and a cigarette," said a former scientific worker from Tajikistan.

So far as Soviet Jews are concerned, it should be said that one of the important reasons for the drop in the number of people emigrating to Israel is that people who have grown up under socialism find it impossible to adapt themselves to the conditions of a totally different social, economic and political system. They are among strangers. They have written about this in numerous appeals to the Soviet authorities, in letters sent to the Soviet press. These confessions are totally devoid of literary invention or political fantasy. They set out the facts, the plain facts testifying to a personal tragedy, life wrecked, hopes crushed and trust betrayed.

Here is what people say who from first-hand experience have learned what life is like in the "Promised Land" and in other countries of the "free" world.

Sofia Davydovich: "It was in Tel Aviv that for the first time in my life I felt anxious for the future of my son. He would not be able to get a full education, because education fees after the eighth year at school are exorbitant. How could I save up enough money? I could not hope to find even a moderately well-paid job. We saw how unemployment drove people to despair. The arrival of new immigrants brought a resurgence of hostility among the local population, because the newcomers would agree to work for the lowest wages.

"Professional people could find no opportunity to use their talents. I saw a former film director from Georgia earning a paltry sum from showing two nature films he had brought with him. He had tried to get a job as a plain photographer, he told me, but was turned down everywhere."

Indeed, everyone moving to the "free world"

starts looking for a job—not just any kind of job but one suiting his trade or profession, his liking, his plans and dreams. In most cases he runs up against an insurmountable barrier: either there is no vacancy at all, or there is no job he likes. In the USSR he knows (and takes it for granted) that the right to work is not only proclaimed by the Constitution but guaranteed to every citizen. In the Soviet Union the last labour exchange was closed down in 1930, marking the end of unemployment. A socialist society is obliged to provide a job for everybody. A citizen has the right to demand, yes, to demand a job. And it is the duty of the state authorities, the trade unions or, in extreme cases, the courts to see to that.

Soviet people justly maintain that there can be no real personal freedom without a guaranteed right to work. So when a person emigrates from the Soviet Union to the West the impossibility of finding a job, though he is strong and eager to work, comes as a shock, because he is used to regarding work as a measure of a person's worth, a spiritual need, a means of self-expression and self-assertion, and not merely a source of a livelihood. Nobody in the West feels obliged to provide him with work. Get your unemployment relief and be content with it! In most cases you can only dream of getting a job of your own choice, one that matches your vocation.

The incompatibility barrier is particularly formidable for engineers, doctors, lawyers, writers, journalists, teachers, actors, film cameramen and film directors. They find themselves in a sorry plight sooner than others. They feel their lives have been ruined and they do not know what to do. They take jobs as night watchmen, porters and common labourers. As far as they are concerned, self-

expression, self-assertion, self-respect and freedom of creativity are words from their past lives which seem increasingly unreal.

Edward Limonov, who emigrated to Israel but ended up in the US, has given a bitter description of a party attended by several emigrants. He writes:

"It was a feast attended by dish washers, a welder, an unemployed worker and a man on welfare (living on unemployment relief). Only a few years ago, if we had met in the USSR, we would have been a poet, a musician..."

Yevgeniya Schmidt: "It was here in Israel that I first saw and felt people going at each other's throats. Denouncing one another to the authorities, intrigue and deceit are quite the normal thing. You cannot trust anyone. Everybody is trying to get the better of others and they think only of their own interests. We realised we could never get acclimatised to such foul moral atmosphere. And we were not the only ones who thought so. Many emigrants from the Soviet Union thought likewise... They were eager to leave Israel as quickly as possible. But not everybody can do this easily. The authorities do their utmost to prevent immigrants leaving Israel."

Upon returning to the USSR, 70-year-old *Hana Bravshstein*, from Kiev said: "We curse the day we decided to leave for Israel. The year and eight months we spent there was an endless nightmare. It's good to be back home again."

What ordeal did the Bravshsteins go through?

Boris, his wife Sulamif, their two children and Boris' mother Hana left for Israel to take part in "building the Jewish state". The term "build" can be taken literally. Boris graduated from a building institute in Penza and Sulamif from a similar institute in Voronezh. They gained professional expe-

rience at construction sites. Boris started learning Hebrew in Kiev with a textbook edited by Professor Shapiro and published in the USSR.

"Our friends tried to dissuade us from going," Boris says. "'Think it over well,' they said. But like many others we fell victim to the political game Tel Aviv was playing. We fell for the propaganda Radio Kol Yisrael fed us.

"The trip from Schöenau Palace in Vienna to Lod, the international airport in Israel, was not a long one. And we became 'olim hadashim' (new immigrants). And to use an Israeli term, it was precisely here we felt like 'agalat' (exiles).

"People have often asked me why I left Israel, though I had a job in my speciality and a flat. My family weren't dying of hunger either. I should say that far from everybody manages to settle down there more or less well. I did not leave Israel, I fled from it. I wanted to save my family, my children from the stagnation and wretchedness into which the Zionists have plunged the people of Israel. I realised that the country I had pictured in my imagination does not exist.

"A person who has grown up and been educated in Soviet society, regardless of his nationality, has only one homeland—the Soviet Union. That is what we said on our way back home, as we exchanged views with the Kreis and Zeltser families from Chernovtsy (in the Ukraine), the Ostrovsky family from Odessa, the Fuzeimans from Tashkent, the Kuvents from Nalchik and other families. All of us are boundlessly grateful to the Soviet government for letting us return to our homeland."

After the Anti-Zionist Committee of Soviet Public Opinion was formed it began regularly to receive letters from abroad from former Soviet citizens, Jews who had left the Soviet Union, in which they

write about their ordeals in strange lands, as well as requests and appeals from their relatives living in the USSR.

It is noteworthy that many of these letters full of bitterness and despair come from those who managed to escape from Israel to countries of what is called the "free world", or from those who left for Western countries on the pretext of emigrating to Israel. Such letters come also from the United States, the richest country of the capitalist world, and from such "prosperous" countries as Austria and West Germany, and also from West Berlin. Let us quote some of these letters, appeals and requests.

AN APPEAL FROM NEW YORK

Dear Comrade Colonel-General Dragunsky!

I, Rosa Faitelevna Gomon (Kagan by marriage), was born and brought up in the Soviet Union.

I have never been a Zionist and I emigrated from the Soviet Union, from Minsk, on September 25, 1979, together with my family including my two children, with an Israeli visa after long persuasion on the part of my relatives. My elder daughter, Julia Borisovna Kagan, didn't want to hear of emigration. But she was under age (she was only 16 when we submitted an application) and was compelled to yield to our persuasion. (The youngest, Ella, who is now 12, is staying with her father, the elder daughter Julia is staying with me).

Only now have I realised what a joy it is to have the right to work, especially if you enjoy a favourite pursuit which makes you and others happy!

A sense of guilt in respect of my elder daughter Julia has been pursuing me from the first day of emigration. Since then we have been living only in the past; we have no present and no future. We can never adapt ourselves to a new society. We

are parted from everyday life. I always feel guilty for leaving my homeland. This feeling is increased by the fact that I have ruined not only my life but also the lives of my children, especially the life of Yulia.

A LETTER FROM WEST BERLIN

Dear Comrade D. A. Dragunsky, dear members of the Committee!

For almost five years I have been away from my homeland which I left under the influence of a relative. I had a homeland, a daughter, a permanent job, friends. I had thoughtlessly deprived myself of what I had.

During my stay away from my homeland I have suffered a lot, thought a lot and understood a lot. The influence exerted by my relative upon me was fatal. I have been deeply mistaken. Having been born in Russia and lived in that country for 41 years, received an education and worked among Soviet people, I experience all the unbearable inner bitterness and complete loneliness to which I have doomed myself.

But no matter what may happen to me I have been, I am and I will be a Soviet person. I will not accept any other citizenship.

Doctor Efim Booz

A LETTER FROM JERSEY CITY (UNITED STATES)

Greetings to you, highly esteemed Comrade Dragunsky!

Former Soviet army officer and former Soviet citizen David Solomonovich Gonta is writing to you. At the end of 1975 I emigrated with my family to the United States. And immediately, two

weeks after our arrival in America, we applied to return to our homeland. Since then we have been worrying and suffering. Life in a capitalist country with its jungle law is alien to Soviet people. We were brought up in the spirit of socialism. We grew up in the country which gave us everything: an education, a job, leisure, free medical care. And all that is important to a human being. In the West a lot is said about the freedom of man, about his rights. But in reality everything is just the opposite.

There can be no question of human rights in the West. For seven years we have been dreaming and trying with all our might to come back to our homeland. To enter an institution of higher education one needs a lot of money. We have no money. Everything in this country is alien to us. We have no life. Especially we fear for our children. What future lies ahead of them?!

A LETTER FROM VIENNA

In January 1970, having yielded to Zionist propaganda, I left for Israel together with my wife, Ester Gershevna Faerman, at the official invitation of my sister who wrote to me about a paradise in "the Promised Land". Upon arrival in Israel I realised at once that I had made a tragic mistake and would never accept the humiliating way of life under the capitalist system... In September 1971 I left with my wife for Vienna. I was born and brought up in the Soviet Union, worked all my life in the city of Bendery (in the Moldavian republic) as a photographer. I had expressions of gratitude for my honest work. On November 23, 1976, a great personal misfortune befell me—my wife, my only friend with whom I have spent all my life, died here in Vienna after a serious operation...

Homeland! This is the most precious word for anyone. We understood it too late, through bitter ordeals.

Yakov Faerman

A REQUEST FROM DONETSK (UKRAINE)

Extreme circumstances have compelled me to apply to you... It is a question of, in the full sense of this word, saving two people, my sister, Yelizaveta Yakovlevna Kogan, and her husband, Leonid Yakovlevich Milshtein, who lived in the city of Chernovtsy, where Zionist propaganda was widespread. Yielding to this propaganda in 1978 they emigrated to the United States with an Israeli visa. It did not take them long to understand everything. After only one month in Cleveland in the USA they realised their mistake, which was next to a catastrophe... They are physically and morally exhausted. Their letters are a cry from the heart. They cannot forgive themselves for yielding to false promises. They have realised that everything Zionist propaganda advocated was a lie... Only recollections of their past life and a hope to return to this life support them.

A LETTER FROM NEW YORK

Greetings to you, dear chairman of the Anti-Zionist Committee Colonel-General Dragunsky. I apply to you as to fair, kind and humane man. I am a former inhabitant of Kiev. On August 31, 1973, through my thoughtlessness I left for Israel. From the first days of my stay in Israel I realised that I had been deceived by Zionists and that they needed only cheap labour and cannon fodder...

In Israel I was persecuted for urging people like myself to return to the homeland and for the fact that I wanted Israel to be socialist and to be friend-

ly with all other peoples. After nine months in Israel I was forced to escape to Europe. Then I moved to the United States and settled in the state of Texas. The local Zionists threatened me for my progressive and socialist views... I escaped from Dallas to New York. Life in the United States is becoming impossible. Everything is getting more and more expensive. Medical services are inaccessible to the ordinary American. Dirt and insanitary conditions are everywhere, as well as gangsterism and banditry. We live here like hostages and don't know what will happen to us tomorrow. Inflation is rising, unemployment is growing... There is no law and order. The police are powerless against gangsterism and violence. It is very difficult for a normal and honest American to live in America, but I have been and remain a Soviet man with all my heart and soul...

Boris Bolotnikov

There are many things which people who have grown up in a socialist society and then find themselves in the West cannot understand: they cannot understand social inequality, luxury on the one hand and poverty on the other, inflation, racial discrimination, gangsterism and corruption, the might and impunity of the mafia—it is hard to list everything. Capitalist reality quickly shatters their illusions. It alienates people from the socialist world by its heartlessness and coldness. Such people remember that at home they will always be helped and taken care of. They will always get a job which as a rule corresponds to their abilities and wishes. They can always give their children an education because it is accessible and free, and secondary education is compulsory. When sick they will always get free medical attention and when old they

will be secure. Society and the people surrounding them need them, they will never be left to the mercy of fate.

That is why there is a high barrier of incompatibility. It involves not only work but ideals, notions, life-styles and standards of behaviour. That is how enlightenment comes bitterly and late. This is clearly seen in the numerous life stories and letters of people who left their Soviet homeland.

This is something that should be remembered by those who shout from the housetops, calling for "a mass emigration" of Soviet Jews to Israel.

* * *

In December 1982, at the meeting to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the foundation of the USSR Yuri Andropov made a profound analysis of the relations between nationalities under developed socialism and set out the main directions towards perfecting them: "The tangible qualitative changes that have taken place in the course of 60 years in the relations between nationalities are evidence that the nationalities question, as it was left to us by the exploiting system, has been settled successfully, finally and irreversibly. For the first time in history the multinational character of a country has turned from a source of weakness into a source of strength and prosperity."

Soviet citizens of Jewish origin, along with all Soviet people, enjoy genuine and full equality in all aspects of state, social, political, economic and cultural life, have ample opportunities and equal rights for their free national development.

They reject with indignation and resentment the slanderous insinuations of Zionist and imperialist propaganda about the alleged existence of what is

called a "Jewish question" in the Soviet Union and they demand that Zionists and their allies should stop their provocative campaigns.

The majority of Soviet Jews have nothing to do with such hackneyed arguments and cliches which Western propaganda centres and Zionist and pro-Zionist pseudo-scientists try to devise and disseminate. The Jews of the Soviet Union are an integral part of the new historic community, the Soviet people. They are actively participating in building a Communist society. They are working honestly and selflessly in many fields of the national economy, medical care, education, science, the arts and literature. Together with the other nations, nationalities and ethnic groups of the Soviet Union Soviet citizens of Jewish origin are engaged in peaceful constructive labour directed toward implementing the grandiose plans outlined by the 26th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

Авандил Константинович Рухадзе

ЕВРЕИ В СССР.

Цифры, факты, комментарии

на английском языке

Цена 40 коп.